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NOTES OF PREPARATION FOR
HOLY COMMUNION

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PRAEPARATIO

OR

NOTES OF PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

FOUNDED ON THE COLLECT, EPISTLE AND GOSPEL FOR EVERY SUNDAY IN THE YEAR

WITH PREFACE BY THE

REV. GEORGE CONGREVE, M.A.

OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, COWLEY

SEVENTH IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
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TO

THE REVEREND THE SUPERIOR

OF THE

Society of St. John the Evangelist

Cowley

IN GRATITUDE FOR KINDNESS WHICH

CAN NEVER BE REPAID

LOVE

LOVE bade me welcome ; yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lack'd any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here :
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd : let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat :
So I did sit and eat.

GEORGE HERBERT.

PREFACE

I REMEMBER the late Canon Wilson[1] of Rownhams speaking of the great spiritual help and consolation which he found in a weekly service of preparation for Holy Communion, at a church where the writer of the following Notes ministered at that time.

Regarding this book as the outcome of those services of preparation, I welcome it with the interest due to what so venerable and dear a person gratefully appreciated.

The Author gives us in these pages a series of short meditations on the Altar Service for each Sunday of the year, to be used in preparation for Holy Communion.

As the hurry and strain of life increase, the difficulty of finding quiet time for meditation increases correspondingly; and the Church is bound to help souls as she may to resist this ceaseless pressure of life outward to the surface where there is no rest,

[1] Newman's pupil and friend, Keble's curate at Hursley, and Pusey's fellow-worker.

and to find and keep a place at that centre of peace, where it meets with God in mental prayer.

The late Bishop Milman of Calcutta, in one of his charges, while rejoicing with his clergy in the increasing opportunities for public service in the churches of his diocese, warned them that public services, however multiplied, could never take the place of private prayer and meditation. On the contrary, he said that the multiplication of public services required a corresponding advance in interior prayer and spiritual life, without which the external service must lose heart and vitality.

And if all our public services gain their true character from the private devotional habits of those who join in them, this will be specially true of our Communions.

We move in a spiritual world too often not realised, because we fail to exercise our spiritual faculties on spiritual things. To go to Communion without preparation is to treat the Holy Sacrament as a thing of the earth, an unreal thing, a spiritual pretence, as a mere external ceremony, or as some matter of natural magic, which is supposed to act mechanically or chemically, not morally and spiritually. But spirit can only act upon our spirit according to the laws of the Spirit. Meditation before Communion is

the summoning of all our spiritual faculties, the awaking of the King's household, as it were, to receive His Majesty, Who comes to us in the holy mysteries.

We acknowledge that the very hand and lips of the communicant receive the glorious Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament; but it is not the hand or the lips that perceive, delight in, and adore Him. It is our faith and love, awakened and illuminated by spiritual prayer, that discern Who it is that comes to us in the Sacrament, and that invite Him to a mansion prepared for Him by penitence and hearty desires.

So great a gift demands a great love. But great love does not spring up accidentally for us, like a wild flower by the road side; we shall find it as the merchant seeking goodly pearls found one pearl of great price. This book will not save us the trouble of thinking, and of seeking Christ for ourselves in the Sacrament, but will train us to think reverently and to seek diligently for so great a treasure.

Among those of us who are used to approach the Altar every Lord's Day, there are perhaps many who may be glad of the help to spend one half-hour a week in meditation, which this book offers us, as a preparation for their weekly communion.

To go through the exercises in this book regularly,

giving half-an-hour to a chapter each week; to turn its thoughts into our own prayers, at some quiet time and place, would be for us an experience in which true devotion might come to life in us,—the spirit of the earnest seeker after God in the holy mysteries might grow strong in us, through the discipline of such faithful preparation.

May Christ accept and bless for the good of His flock, what His servant offers to Him with great reverence.

G. CONGREVE, S.S.J.E.

CAPETOWN, *July* 1, 1901.

INTRODUCTION

THE writer has seen, in congregations of various classes, the great benefit of services of preparation for Holy Communion, in inducing both a more reverent approach to the Blessed Sacrament and a closer interest in the progressive teaching of the Church.

Some of these Notes have already appeared, in substance, in the pages of the *Church Review*, and are reprinted by the kind permission of the Editor. Most of them are echoes of Addresses given in previous years. Much in them has been taken from other writers, especially the Right Rev. the Bishop of Albany, and the Right Rev. the Bishop of Vermont. In some cases references have been given; in others the quotations are simply marked, the exact authority having been forgotten. In many cases the spirit rather than the letter has been followed.

It must be borne in mind that these are only *Notes*, a framework of quotations and suggestions, to be used and expanded by those who are willing to spend time in preparation for their Master's Gift. They will only be intelligible if used with constant reference to the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for each week.

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Preparation for Communion

The First Sunday in Advent

The Collect.—Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of life, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. xiii. 8. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xxi. 1.

Advent an end and a beginning.

I. Advent an opportunity for retrospect. Look back over the Advents of Christ to the individual soul since last Advent Sunday.

(i.) The comings of Christ to the soul in absolution. So many confessions made, so many absolutions received. Christ the Priest, Christ the Absolver, coming to the soul seeking fruit; and yet—

(ii.) So many attendances at the Holy Eucharist, entering into the very Presence-chamber of Christ the King; so many prayers said,

so many intentions offered, so many inspirations of the Holy Spirit; and yet—

(iii.) So many preparations for Communion, so many Communions made; so many Advents of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to the soul, in all the fulness and reality of His love and power; and yet—

What with the opportunities of the past year of grace we *ought to be* and what we *are*.

II. Advent the commencement of a new period of grace.

The story of God's love and of man's redemption once more to be unfolded.

The birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension of our Lord once more to pass before us.

God offers a new series of opportunities. It is for us to use them. "The night cometh when no man can work." We cannot tell when the night shall close upon our lives: the shadows already may be gathering.

The only thing to be done is *at once to begin again*.

We hardly dare. The old beginnings and the old failures, the unfulfilled promises and the broken resolutions haunt us; what can we do with them?

Mould them with the tears of contrition into the concrete of stability, and build therewith the steps whereby to mount to better things, the steps which shall lead to the altar of perfect sacrifice.

III. Advent the season of preparation.

Life a preparation for death; life the preparation for eternity. The preparation twofold—

(*a*) We are bidden to prepare: "Prepare to meet thy God;"

(*b*) Christ, by His advents to the soul, is seeking to prepare us.

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness."

In Advent the Church seeks to prepare us;

(i.) For commemoration of Christ's past coming in great humility at Bethlehem;
(ii.) For His present coming in great humility in the Blessed Sacrament at Christmas.

The pure in heart shall see God manifest in the Flesh.
The lowly-minded shall hear the angels' song.

Say the *Veni, Creator.*

The Collect sounds the note of warning.

He Who has come will come. He Who came in love will come in judgment.

We shall be judged for the use which we have made of the love manifested.

He Who came in humility will come in His glorious Majesty to judge all, for all have been the objects of His love.

He came to raise those sunk in the darkness of sin to the light of His eternal Presence.

Darkness hides Him from us; the works of darkness blind our eyes so that we cannot see Him in the humility of His present Advents.

But if we have not learnt to see Him *now*, what will be the effect of the vision of His glorious Majesty? Shame and confusion of face.

Hence our prayer, "Give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life."

The work must be done *now*, in this season of oppor-

tunity, this period of life to be closed by death, which the Son of God came to share with us, visiting us with His salvation.

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."

The Epistle continues the warning, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep." The past will suffice for neglect and sloth; the present is ours; the future is God's.

We are told what are the works of darkness and what is the armour of light.

Self-love in its various forms, indulgence, strife, envying, enshrouds the soul in darkness. Love, positive and active, "the fulfilling of the law," is to the soul as the armour of light against the assaults of the powers of darkness.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," for "the Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?"

"Make not provision for the flesh," for "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."

The Gospel contains the warning from the past. God had prepared, but man had neglected.

The King comes in great humility, "meek, and riding upon an ass." He rides in triumph, but He is consciously riding to His death.

The people welcome Him with a transient emotion, but the echo of the "Hosanna" of to-day is the "Crucify Him" of the morrow.

He had come to Jerusalem in type and shadow, but they, His chosen people, had received Him not. He had pleaded with them by the mouth of His servants the prophets, and by His forerunner.

He had come to them in His infancy and in His manhood. He had worked miracles, and had taught in their streets.

He comes now for the last time, and in His coming is judgment—

> "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

It is the voice of Divine Love speaking in judgment.

We come to the Holy Eucharist on Advent Sunday with the warnings of the past sounding in our ears.

> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Christ had come to them, and they "despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

Christ has come to us; He has come so often: He has done such wonders in our midst; the Eucharist is a daily miracle of His love.

We look back to our Communions of the past; we look on to the Communions which we hope, if God spare us, to make in the future.

Each Communion ought to be a preparation for the next. Each is to be better than the preceding.

Each Communion during Advent is to be a preparation for the best offering of which we are capable when the King comes to us at Christmas.

"Behold thy King cometh unto *thee*." Cast down before Him as he approaches—

(i.) Thy contrition for past neglect of grace.
"I have loved darkness rather than light."

(ii.) Thy humility for present coldness, the consequence of past neglect.
"What am I that my King should come to me?"

(iii.) Thy resolution for the future.
"God helping me, I will begin again at once."

The Second Sunday in Advent

The Collect.—Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. xv. 4. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xxi. 25.

The one word for the second Sunday in Advent—HOPE.

It is so exactly the word we need. We resolved to "begin again," and to "begin again at once," but—we had so little hope.

The memory of past beginnings oppressed us: we have begun again so often, and have so often failed.

Past Advents came back to our minds, when we had meant to do so much, but had striven so little; had started so well, and had failed so quickly.

We almost hesitated this Advent to make any resolution at all; we thought we would take things as they came, and just do what we could, stumbling along the path of life.

Even when we did make the resolution, it was with a kind of afterthought, "I know I shall fail."

There was so much thought of self, so little thought of God.

We represented ourselves as standing alone, relying upon our own strength, which is but weakness.

We forgot Him Who "in great humility" was waiting to meet us and our resolution, and to take us and our weakness into union with His strength in the Blessed Sacrament. We offer weakness, and He gives back strength.

Conscious of our infirmity, we must yet "begin again"; daily, weekly, binding ourselves to Him in prayer and Sacrament; ever "hoping," because of His Presence and His love, for ultimate success.

We say the Advent Collect daily throughout the season; it contains the foundation of our hope.

In the Incarnation God "began again" in His dealings with fallen man. It was His eternal purpose, but to man it was a new beginning. "I will send unto them My Son."

Man did not, could not, ask for such a new beginning; it was the outcome of the eternal love of God.

Man's hope in each fresh effort is that God begins again with him. God deals with individual souls as with the world. He is always beginning again.

Each Eucharist is a fresh beginning of God's love; of each Eucharist it is true, "I will send unto them my Son."

Consider the marvel of the persevering love of God.

Where shall hope be found? The Collect tells us that it is "given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ," to Whom the Holy Scriptures bear witness: "they are they which testify of Me."

In the study of the Scriptures Christ is ever coming to the soul, for wherever we read, if we read in the light of the Holy Spirit, we find Him.

They are so familiar to us that we read them perfunctorily and carelessly. But when we read with prayer for illumination, His Form is revealed to us, clearly in some places, dimly in others.

Faith working with patience beholds His Presence in the records of history, in type, in sacrifice, and in prophecy.

But there must be effort; we must "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest;" and effort requires patience.

Through "the comfort of the Scriptures" thus studied comes the blessing of hope, even "the blessed hope of everlasting life given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ."

> "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

The Collect is founded on the Epistle, and the Epistle being a part of God's "Holy Word," strengthens the hope which we have prayed we may "ever hold fast."

"The God of patience and consolation." Who but an inspired apostle could have written such words, which we recognise at once as the revelation which our souls need?

"The God of patience"—the wellspring whence must flow the patience in which we so often fail.

We are the objects of Divine patience. Past Advents, past failures tell us so—

> "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit, and find none."

The patience of Jesus on the Cross, and in the Blessed Sacrament, waiting for the love of souls. "I thirst."

Only through union with the patience of Jesus can we expect to attain to patience in our trials, sorrows, efforts after holiness.

Through patience we "embrace" hope; patience, resting upon the God of consolation, enables us to hold it fast.

> "O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit."

Christ, by the Incarnation, has "confirmed the promises made unto the fathers." "Our fathers hoped in Thee, they put their trust in Thee, and were not confounded." We have entered into the fulfilment of their hope.

> "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and hope in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

The God of patience, of consolation, and of hope! How much we have to learn of the fulness of God! Every need finds its satisfaction in Him.

"Joy and peace in believing;" *i.e.* in the revelation of God manifest in the flesh—in the Incarnation.

The angels sang the hymn of joy and peace when Christ was born and hope shone upon the world.

Joy, peace, hope will be ours in proportion to our faith in the Incarnate Son.

The Gospel tells us of His Advent in the future, and yet it tells us of His coming in the present. "Your redemption draweth nigh." "The Kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

Advent is the time of looking for redemption in patience and in hope. Christmas is the coming of the Redeemer for Whom our soul waits, and in Whom it has hoped. In Advent we learn how greatly we need redemption and a Redeemer.

Advent is the time of preparation for the coming of the King. At Christmas the King comes to receive the homage of His patient, hoping servants. "The King is a child."

But each coming involves a judgment.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

Take His words of promise, of hope, of encouragement; use them, prove them, build on them. You, too, will find they "shall not pass away."

He fulfils to us His word in the Holy Eucharist. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Men's hearts do, indeed, "fail them for fear"; but faith, in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, can say—

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?"

"And now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee."

"He shall hide me in His tabernacle."

In preparation for your approach to the Altar;

(i.) Humble yourself before the patience of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

(ii.) Consider the hope which springs from faith in His Presence and His Union with yourself.

(iii.) Resolve, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to "hold fast the blessed hope" which is thus vouchsafed to you.

The Third Sunday in Advent

The Collect.—O Lord Jesu Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. iv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xi. 2.

The love of God in preparation.

Preparation is the keynote of Advent. Whichever way we think of the Coming of Christ there must be preparation.

We are not preparing for the coming of a fact, but for the Advent of a *Person.*

"Prepare the way before Him Who comes," that is the burden of the Old Testament revelation. Men were not to look for a change of dispensation, but for the Coming of a Person. "A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."

He is to be Holy, Just, and Good; a Sufferer, but a King; a Child, and yet "the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

On faith in the Person depends the preparation for the fact of His Coming.

God will have none come into the Divine Presence unprepared. He bids us prepare, and at the same time, in His love, prepares us.

All life, with its experiences, its trials and discipline, is given by God as the preparation for the final Coming of His Son. We have to use that which God's Wisdom sends us.

The Sacraments, being Advents of Christ to the soul, are His means of preparing us for death, judgment, and eternity.

The Sacraments are not so many isolated facts; they are so many Personal Comings of Christ to the individual soul.

In Baptism He comes to unite the infant life to Himself that it may grow up with Him in time, and be sharer of His glory hereafter.

In Confirmation He comes to strengthen the soul by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to prepare it for its conflict with the world.

In Absolution He comes to cleanse, that the soul may grow in purity and be trained in fitness for His Presence.

In the Blessed Sacrament He comes, humble and yet the King, meek and yet the Omnipotent.

He comes to reveal Himself to the humble soul in preparation for the final revelation, to strengthen it that it may climb more bravely the steps which lead to His Throne; to prepare it by sacramental union now for union unchanging and eternal in the Kingdom of His Father.

How we need to pray for faith wherewith to see, and love wherewith to welcome, these Comings of our King! Each coming is a preparation of love.

Our thoughts on this Sunday are so filled with the ex-

pectation of our King that the Collect is a direct prayer to Him. He is the one object of our hope and of our thoughts.

We call to mind the mission of the Forerunner, who was sent by the love of God with one express purpose—to prepare the way before Him.

From the teaching of St. John Baptist we learn the law of preparation.

He Who comes now being the same Person Who came then, the law of preparation must be the same—there must be *repentance*.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" into which "shall in no wise enter anything that defileth."

The King is coming Who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and before He can enter into union with sinful man there must be on man's part repentance and cleansing.

> "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

The work must be done, the preparation made, before the glory of the Lord can be revealed.

In the spiritual world, as in the natural, there must be a casting down and a building up; the crooked life must be made straight, and the rough places plain, that the King may enter in and triumph gloriously in the regenerate life.

The King must be all in all. Therefore the self must be cast down and the deep places of shame and abasement must be filled up with acts of contrition and works of piety and charity.

The life which has grown crooked, through the wander-

ings of sin, must be straightened through penance, and brought within the bounds of the royal road of the Cross; its rough inequalities, the result of undisciplined passions, must be made plain.

Then and then only can the King enter into the heart and life which by redemption are His own.

Is man, in himself, sufficient to prepare in his own heart the way of the Lord?

No, God sends His messengers to do a special work, and on them rests a primary responsibility. The individual who receives the message has to work with him who delivers it; both are to have the same object—the preparation of the way of the Lord.

> "Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may so prepare and make ready Thy way."
>
> "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

The awful responsibility which rests on the ministers and stewards of Christ.

The responsibility which rests on us as recipients of such ministrations, and partakers at their hands of "the mysteries of God."

The judgment which awaits all—priests and laity—for the faithful discharge of responsibility, for the use made of the mysteries, when "the Lord comes, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

How thankful we must be that in the tribunal of penance we can anticipate, and prepare for, that final judgment.

The love of God provides the means; man has to make use of them.

"Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

He comes in the Sacrament of Penance to give salvation, before we draw nigh to His Presence on the Altar, or in the Manger at Bethlehem.

Consider the effects of the Sacrament of Penance on those who come in Advent, seeking salvation.

"The blind receive their sight;" the works of darkness are cast away, and men see the Son of Man coming in great humility.

"The lame walk;" the chains of sin are unloosed, and we are enabled to run in the way of God's Commandments.

"The lepers are cleansed;" the defilement of sin is washed away by the Precious Blood of Christ—"I will; be thou clean."

"The deaf hear:" O welcome Voice of Jesus which sounds in ears long dull of hearing! "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

"The dead are raised up;" souls dead in trespasses and sins are lifted up to newness of life in restored union with their Lord.

"The poor have the Gospel preached to them;" "Unto us"—poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness—"unto us a Son is born, unto us a Son is given." "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."

Consider the necessity of the Sacrament of Penance.

Hereafter the Lord will come "Who will bring to light

the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart."

The secrets of all hearts will be revealed *then*. It will be too late to seek repentance *then*. "*Now* is the day of salvation."

In the Holy Eucharist the Lord does come, even now.

"And because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience," therefore it is our duty and it is our privilege, before we approach His Presence, by our own act, to "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" in our own lives.

"The stewards of the mysteries of God" have received His Divine Commission. It is for us to use the means of preparation which Christ Himself has ordained.

> "Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord; or who shall rise up in His Holy place? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart."
>
> "Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord."

Before you draw near to God's Altar,

(i.) Examine self—

(*a*) As to your past use of "the mysteries of God," the means and ministry of preparation which His love has provided for you.

(*b*) As to your present condition; blind? lame? leprous? deaf? dead in trespasses and sin?

(ii.) Remember—

The Holy Child waits for the love of your purified soul on Christmas Day. You can offer nothing less.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Collect.—O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Phil. iv. 4. *The Gospel.*—St. John i. 19.

"The Lord is at hand." The approach of the celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation—the festival of the Holy Child.

We began Advent with the resolution, more or less sincere, to "begin again," but we were met with hindrances from

(*a*) Fresh assaults of former sins.
(*b*) Want of hope and patience in endeavour.
(*c*) Want of strength in resistance.

With such experience consider the teaching of this, the last Sunday in Advent.

(i.) "Raise up Thy power, and come among us." We do not even say "Send help to us"; we are taught to ask God Himself, the Word made Flesh, to come among us.

Christmas is the answer to that prayer.

(ii.) "With great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us."

When we meet with hindrances, even self-caused, there is comfort in the thought that they come to us in a race *set before us.*

God has chosen and marked out our course. So long as we keep to it we may feel sure of His merciful help.

Nay, more; the Son of God Himself has run the race, and knows every danger of the track in which His servants have to follow.

He has shown us not only "the path of life," but the spirit in which the race must be run.

Jesus "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame."

"Wherefore let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

"Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith."

How our Mother, the Church, understands the needs of her children and puts into their mouths the very words which best express their needs.

Mercy, grace, power. Are they not the very things of which our experience tells us we stand in want in the midst of our sore hindrances?

"*Mercy*"—for the past, and for that which in our Confessions we shall acknowledge.

"*Bountiful grace*"—in Absolution and Communion;

grace in proportion to our needs and our capacity for reception; grace for all in accordance with their several necessities.

"*Power*" and "*great might*"—to enable us to run the race, to fight our own and the Church's battles, to resist temptation, and to hold fast "the blessed hope."

All—mercy, grace, power—all to be found in the Incarnate Son of God, and in Him alone.

Mercy.—"According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Grace.—"The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth."

Power.—"As many as received Him to them gave He power."

The Epistle takes up and deepens the same teaching.

What a contrast it offers to our despondent efforts and poverty of hope!

> "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

How can I rejoice when I think of my failures, my lack of success, my sore hindrances, and my sins?

Look no more on self, but to Bethlehem, for "the Lord is at hand"—"the Lord of all power and might;" the God of hope and of consolation, of mercy and of grace.

Therefore "be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Oh, what a Christmas Eucharist it will be if only we can

do that; if only we can make known before the Divine Presence *all* our requests, all we seek for ourselves and for others, for all we love, whether living or at rest; if only we can tell out, with entire confidence and self-surrender, *all* our fears, our sorrows, our anxieties, our desires!

We are bidden to do so, we are encouraged to do so, for "unto us a Child is born."

Partaker of our nature, He is born into a world of sorrow and of sin; Son of God, and Son of Mary; born to save, yet born to die; born to suffer, and yet born to reign.

Faith sees, faith penetrates the thin veil which hides Him from our gaze; faith beholds the Incarnate God, before Whom in humblest devotion our requests are to be made known.

And then, on the soul thus coming, thus trusting, there falls "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," which is to "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"My peace I give unto you;" that peace which only the redeemed and reconciled in Christ can enjoy; that peace which those "accepted in the Beloved" find in living union with "the Prince of Peace"; that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. "On earth peace."

The Gospel is all Christ. The Forerunner is about to disappear, the Christ is to be manifested.

The Forerunner has done his appointed work of preparation; He has cried in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord."

On the ears of those who have heard the Voice, and not obeyed the call to repentance, there falls, with startling suddenness, the announcement, "There standeth One

among you *Whom ye know not.*" "He it is . . . Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

He meets us once again, this last Sunday in Advent. Who shall say whether it may not be His last Advent? He calls us to worship before His Manger Throne on Christmas Day.

"There standeth One among you"—how shall the sentence be finished?—"Whom ye know" or "Whom ye know *not?*"

We have heard the voice of the Holy Church in the midst of the wilderness of the world, the call of the ministers and stewards of mysteries of God urging us to prepare to meet the Child-King, Whom to know is everlasting life.

He calls us from the altar; He wants us to see the vision of His beauty. But only they can know, only they can see, who in self-abasement stoop to own their own unworthiness.

"He humbled Himself," and only they who, in humiliation and penitence, humble themselves before the majesty of His Presence, can hope to see "the fair beauty of the Lord."

In preparation for Christmas communion, ask for the light of the Holy Spirit to enable you—

(i.) To see that within yourself which hinders;

(ii.) To see the "bountiful grace and mercy" offered you in "the mysteries of God";

(iii.) To see, with the eye of faith, humility, and adoring love, "the Babe lying in a manger."

"O COME LET US ADORE HIM, CHRIST THE LORD."

The Sunday after Christmas Day

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who hast given us Thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; Grant that we, being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Gal. iv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. i. 18.

God Incarnate, and the correlative of this great mystery, man in God, are the main points of the teaching of the Christmas season. The human Sonship of Christ, the Divine sonship of man.

By the operation of the Holy Ghost, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, born of a pure Virgin, became the Son of Man.

By the operation of the same Spirit we are born again, through the waters of Baptism, and become the sons of God.

The teaching of the Epistle and Gospel for Christmas Day is purely doctrinal. The Gospel for the Sunday in the octave contains the story of the Nativity.

We have to learn the reality of both natures in Christ; the human and the Divine.

He is "the Word." "In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

He called Himself the Son of God, and when the Jews charged Him with thus making Himself "equal with God," He asserted the validity of His claim.

He was "equal with God": this, and nothing less. "God of God; Very God of Very God." This is what He claimed, and what the Church teaches.

And yet He was "made Flesh and dwelt among us." Even more than that, "He tabernacled *in* us."

He "was made Man." He became the second Adam, taking upon Himself not merely one man's nature, but taking upon Him *our* nature, the nature of humanity.

As His Godhead was real, so was His manhood. He was born and lay upon His Virgin Mother's breast; He "increased in wisdom and stature"; He endured both hunger and thirst; He suffered, and He died.

This is the mystery of the Incarnation.

> "God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world."
>
> "Perfect God and perfect Man. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood."

Faith, illumined by the Holy Ghost, bows in humble adoration before the manger at Bethlehem in which we behold the Mystery of God made Man.

The Collect, building on this foundation, makes application of the doctrine to us and to our sonship—

> "That we being regenerate and made Thy children by adoption and grace."

Notice the immediate effects of the Incarnation.

(i.) We receive the blessing of new birth, regeneration.

(ii.) Through that new birth we become incorporated unto the Life of the Son of God.

(iii.) By virtue of that incorporation we become the sons of God.

> "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Holy Baptism is the means, appointed by Christ Himself, for our admission into the Kingdom of God on earth.

The Holy Ghost overshadowed the Blessed Virgin; of the woman's substance and of the Spirit was born the Son of God, the Son of Man; she became "the Theotokos."

The Holy Spirit overshadows the material element in Baptism; "of water and of the Spirit" are born the sons of God.

But as the Incarnate Son was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," so the sons of God, passing through the wilderness of this life, meet the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in meeting them they suffer wounds and loss.

Consider the provision of the love of God. Regeneration is one thing, renewal is another; the latter an ever-fresh proof of the love of God.

> "Grant that we, being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit."

Through our sacramental union with the Son of God, the indwelling presence of "the Spirit of His Son" is assured to us.

God's will for us as His sons is, that we, giving up ourselves as His Son gave up Himself, led of the Spirit as He was led, should daily be renewed in the virtues and graces which should adorn the children of God; growing "up into Him, in all things, which is the Head."

As children we are liable to fall. Our supply of spiritual strength has to be renewed, like the strength of our bodies.

The bodily strength needs renewal through food and rest. The spiritual strength we cannot in ourselves renew, but He Who has made us His children, and allows us to call Him "Abba, Father," renews that strength by the power of His Spirit. We have to use the means which He, with a Father's love, has provided.

The renewal, like the need, will be *daily*.

"Give us this day our daily bread;" the bread sufficient for our needs. To-day's needs are not to-morrow's; but all are met by the renewal of the Holy Ghost.

Hence the necessity of regularity in prayer and use of the sacraments.

Absolution removes the causes of weakness; the Blessed Sacrament gives renewal of union with the Holy Child, and of participation in the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

The spirit in which we ought to approach the altar during the Christmas season—

(i.) Faith, in the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation. Kneeling before the Child in the manger we "adore Him, Christ the Lord."

(ii.) Hope, springing from the consciousness of our adoption into the family of God.

(iii.) Love, responsive to the Divine love which provides for our daily renewal.

Resolve to offer to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the coming year—

(*a*) A sacrifice like that of the Holy Innocents.
(*b*) A constancy like that of the first martyr, St. Stephen.
(*c*) A faithfulness of love like that of the Beloved Disciple.

So, whatever of earthly trial the new year may bring, we, as the children of God, shall have the love of the Father, the Presence of the Son, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

Epiphany and First Sunday After

The Collect.—O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. xii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke ii. 41.

The love of God in the manifestation of His Son; our present faith, our future fruition—such is the teaching of the Services of the Epiphany.

All springs from the love of God. God prepares, God sends, God manifests: man by faith makes ready for, welcomes, accepts the revelation.

But the acceptance is still a preparation. The revelation is under humble veils, hidden from the wise and prudent, revealed to babes, in whom exists the spirit of humility, purity, and dependence.

The revelation in time is the preparation for eternity. Then at last the Son of God, welcomed and worshipped in the world, shall be known with the fulness of knowledge, and be the eternal joy and reward of His faithful servants.

It was the love of God which called the Wise Men, and which led them through their toilsome journey. Long days, wearisome fatigue, frequent disappointments they must have experienced, but faith upheld them.

The leading of God is manifested to them in the star, and they press on to a fuller Epiphany, the fruition of their labour and their faith. It is a King they seek, but a King Whose Throne is one of royal humility.

We see them in the attainment of their hope—the sight of the Mother and the Holy Child upon her knee. There is the fruition; all thought of past toil, past days of heat and nights of watching—all are forgotten now.

God called; they responded with active faith; and God reveals to them His Son. They are in the Presence of the King of kings, the Lord of lords; the Infinite in the form of the Child; they worship, they adore, pouring out their prophetic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

> "As they offer'd gifts most rare
> At Thy cradle rude and bare;
> So may we with holy joy,
> Pure and free from sin's alloy,
> All our costliest treasures bring,
> Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King."

In calling them out of darkness into light, God called us; in manifesting His Son to the Gentiles, He manifests Him to us.

In that manifestation, the love of God "so full and boundless" embraced all men of all time, for He would have all come to the knowledge of the truth, that knowing that truth now by faith, they might attain to the fruition of His glorious Godhead.

With these thoughts in mind we enter upon the lessons taught us by the services for the Sundays and the season of the Epiphany.

On each Sunday the Church brings before us some fresh manifestation of Christ, desiring that her children, learning to live by faith now, may at length "know the love of

Christ which passeth knowledge," and "be filled with all the fulness of God."

The Child Christ is revealed in the Temple. His Mother and St. Joseph have sought Him sorrowing, for in losing Him they have lost all, the centre of the home at Nazareth, the light of their eyes, the joy of their existence.

They seek Him among the things of earth, "among their kinsfolk and friends," but He is not there.

They find Him in the Temple of God, where His wisdom has been manifested in "His understanding and answers," and where He reveals His Divine parentage in His reply to His Mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business."

Note that He too has to pass through His stages of preparation.

He must "be about His Father's business" before He can say, "Father, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do."

He must go down to Nazareth and be subject, He must learn obedience through suffering, before He can enter into the fruition of His labours and say, "O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine Own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

In all things He has "to be made like unto His brethren."

We come into His Temple, seeking Him; "We beseech Thee to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee."

We come in faith, knowing that He has promised to hearken to our prayers.

We come with our unwisdom and our ignorance, oft-times asking for what it would be ill for us to receive, and we are afterwards "astonished at His understanding and answers."

The Eternal Wisdom of God! What a theme it is for our meditation—the Wisdom of God manifested in Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Grant that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do." Especially so near to the commencement of a new year the words are the expression of our consciousness and our needs.

We want to do well in the year on which we have entered—we want to serve better, to love better, to worship better Him Who has revealed His love to us at Christmas, but we are not sure of ourselves or of our path.

Therefore, wisely, we pray to be led, as were the Magi, to be shown "what things we ought to do."

The love of God meets us so readily. We are not left alone, unlighted by the wisdom from on high. Christ is "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God." "If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

We come to the Blessed Sacrament to be made partakers of Christ, and in that sacred Communion we receive Him Who is the Wisdom of God. His Holy Spirit illumines, guides us, takes of the life of Christ, and shows it to us in its application to ourselves.

We take that life, with its first recorded word, and in that life we find the answer to our prayer, which we may summarise under—

1. Love for the House of God, because it is our Father's house.

2. A teachable spirit.
3. Our "Father's business" our first thought, in whatever for us that business may consist.
4. Sanctification of the home-life by subjection of self to the Divine Will.
5. Progressive wisdom, the preparation for fuller Epiphanies.

All these may be found in the record of the finding of Christ in the Temple given us in the Gospel for this Sunday, and may, in some parts at least, be traced in the Epistle.

> "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

"Be not conformed to this world." Hope not to find Christ in the world, in society, in pleasure, even in a selfish eagerness for work. Christ is found in the Temple of God, in Sacrament, prayer, and meditation; there He reveals Himself to those who seek Him faithfully.

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Our views of life, our preconceived ideas, have often to be abandoned when tried by the supreme test of our Father's Will.

"That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God." He who perceives in everything which comes to him in the way of duty "His Father's business," will grow daily in the doing of His Father's Will.

Nothing is too small, nothing too insignificant then. Once see that the task to be learnt, the duty to be done, the effort to be made, *is* our Father's business, and how the difficulties vanish; self diminishes and God becomes all in all.

"*Perceive* and *know*." They are not the same. A man may perceive what he ought to do, may even perceive what is the Will of God concerning him, and yet may fail to know that Will actively.

He fails because of lack of real union with the Wisdom of God; he has been looking at life from his own standpoint, not as sheltered and hidden in the life of Christ his Lord. Only when united with Christ and lifted thereby out of self and above the earth can he hope really to know and rejoice in the "perfect Will of God."

Yes, you say, but perception, even knowledge, is one thing and doing is quite another. "The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do." Who does not know it?

Thanks be to God, the Wisdom of God knows both our imperfections and our necessities, and God loves us far too well to show us His Will and to leave us without the power of performing it.

In the life of Christ is the revealed Will; in that same life, communicated to us, reside the grace and power whereby we may faithfully fulfil that Will.

Men think of that Will of God as though it were hidden on some mountain top, and God had left them, poor, weak, guideless creatures, to find their way thitherward as best they may, falling bruised, almost hopeless in their vain upward efforts.

That is not the revelation of the Son of God to man. Christ comes into the plane of this world, mixing with His suffering, anxious brethren, in Him is the Will of God manifested, and through the union to which He invites us does the doing of that Will become possible.

This, and this only, will enable us to "do the Will of

God from the heart" (Eph. vi. 6), and to "stand perfect and complete in all the Will of God" (Col. iv. 12).

Take then the five points which I have mentioned, and try so to draw near to His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, that there may be to you a manifestation of all the wonders of His human life: the love, the devotion to duty, the humility, and the self-surrender which there you may behold.

Then present yourself, your soul, your body, to Him as a living sacrifice, asking that His Will, and His only, may be done *in* you, and *by* you, so that *through* you there may be an Epiphany of the life of Jesus Christ your Lord.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; Mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people, and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. xii. 6. *The Gospel.*—St. John ii. 1.

Our Blessed Lord had already received the witness of the Father by the Voice from Heaven, and the public witness of St. John the Baptist who was sent to bear "witness to the Truth."

Christ Himself had declared, "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me."

He had promised Nathanael, "thou shalt see greater things than these," and the fulfilment of the prediction followed close upon the promise. At Cana of Galilee, as we read in the Gospel for to-day, Christ "manifested forth His glory."

Three points to be noticed in the Gospel:—

(*a*) The circumstances of the Manifestation.
(*b*) The nature of the Manifestation.
(*c*) The effects.

(*a*) It was at a wedding feast to which Jesus and His disciples were bidden, and at which we see Him sharing

the innocent joys of His brethren, "adorning and beautifying with His Presence the Holy estate of Matrimony."

Conscious of the distress likely to be occasioned to the givers of the feast by the want of sufficient wine, and listening to His Blessed Mother's suggestion of their need, He changes the water into wine.

(*b*) This miracle revealed our Lord as possessing power of a Creator. He Who had once taken of the dust of the earth and elevated it in the order of existence, so that by His breathing upon it "man became a living soul," now manifests Himself, in the Flesh of Man as Lord of Creation.

"Almighty and Everlasting God," we say in the Collect, "Who dost govern all things in heaven and earth."

But as He is Lord of Creation, so, too, He reveals Himself as Lord of a New Creation, by which His former work is to be exalted to a much higher plane in the dispensation of His Providence.

In this miracle Christ prefigured that work of re-creation which He now causes to be wrought in His Kingdom for the salvation of souls and bodies.

Simple elements pass silently beneath the power of His blessing: His servants bear forth; water becomes generous wine.

So Holy Baptism exalts the souls and bodies of men from the kingdom of Nature to the kingdom of Grace, and the Holy Eucharist is the means by which our whole nature is built up into the nature of Christ, elevated from one step to another, "changed from glory to glory."

At the Marriage Feast was revealed "the union which is betwixt Christ and His Church," that union by which the virtue of the Incarnation is extended to fallen humanity.

(*c*) The immediate effect of the miracle was that "His

disciples believed on Him;" His glory, revealed by His power over the humble element of water, is manifested, and faith is deepened in those who followed Him.

Faith is progressive, gradual in growth, and needs education and cultivation by the means which God provides for its increase. Compare St. John i. 41, ii. 23, and vii. 5.

His glory is still being manifested, and by its manifestation cause is given for belief.

(i.) The miracle is continuously being wrought by the elevation of lowly elements into sacramental substances.

(ii.) By the regeneration and edification of souls through their operation.

The effects of this work of re-creation and edification are to be traced in the Epistle. The "good wine" strengthens and stimulates to good works—enabling us to dispense to others those gifts which we receive as partakers with Christ.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." The gifts are of God; man has to recognise his responsibilities and, strengthened by grace, to manifest the glory of Christ, the Head, by the use made of them.

The ministry, the teaching, the ruling, the power of absolving—these are examples of the differing gifts. We have to use them with diligence, with faithfulness, and simplicity.

Love, kindness, fervour, patience, constancy in prayer, generosity, unity and humility—these are the marks of the regenerate life.

He Who could change the water into wine, transforming

the character of the element from a lower to a better condition, effects a like marvellous change in our nature by the powers of His Incarnate Life.

Contrast the picture contained in the Epistle of the life of grace and re-creation, with that of man in his fallen and unregenerate condition.

Still, in every age, through the lives of His brethren in the kingdom of the regeneration, Christ manifests His glory, and those who seek to learn, "believe on Him."

The Collect sums up—though not perhaps very obviously—the truths presented.

(i.) God governs all things in heaven and earth. He created and re-creates. All things in the kingdom of Nature and of Grace are alike subject to His governance.

(ii.) His mercy is ever ready to hear the supplications of His people. Even when hardly expressed—"they have no wine"—as petitions, yet He reads them and supplies His brethren's needs.

(iii.) His power, manifested in response to supplication, brings the peace for which we pray. "My God shall supply all your need by Christ Jesus."

In the Holy Eucharist we sit down with Christ at the Marriage Feast, in which He is made One with His Bride the Church.

His Presence is the Presence of Incarnate Love and Power. The Love never changes, the Power never weakens.

In love He allows us to sit with Him; with power He commissions His servant, the priest; with power He so

transforms the weak elements of the Bread and Wine, that they become to us His Very Body and His Very Blood.

There is no limit to His Love, as there is no limit to His Power. What He wills to do He is able to do. Faith bows before the majesty of such Love and Power. He manifests His glory—though hidden now beneath the Sacramental Veils as formerly beneath the form of His humiliation—and we believe on Him.

We bring to Him, in the Blessed Sacrament, our supplications. We are conscious

(i.) Of our responsibilities, our ministry, our life of duty, our obligations, the gifts or talents which we have received; of our incapacity, in our natural strength, to discharge them adequately or faithfully.

(ii.) We are conscious as we kneel in the Sacred Presence of what life should be—life transformed, regenerated, uplifted through union with the Incarnate Son. And we are conscious of what life *is*.

In ourselves, so weak, we offer our supplications to Him Who governs all things in heaven and in earth; we can only point to our lives and to our needs. He marks, He sees, He knows, He manifests His glory, and to us come faith and peace.

The peace of absolute confidence; the peace of conscious union; the peace of assured victory; the very peace of God which passeth all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Peace reigns within our souls as we realise that He Who holds our lives, and listens to our supplications, and directs our circumstances is Love, Wisdom, Power—"God manifest in the flesh."

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy Right Hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. xii. 16. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. viii. 1.

In the Gospels during the Epiphany season various phases of human life are portrayed. On the first Sunday boyhood, youth, home life, and home duties; on the second, the joys of life, the marriage feast at Cana.

To-day the picture is one of misery and sorrow: the leper in his misery; the Centurion in his anxiety for his servant "sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."

Through these pictures of human life, in its various stages and aspects, runs the thread of one Life clear and distinct, touching the lives of all around it at all points, yet standing by itself in its marked individuality.

A Life, growing, developing according to the laws of human existence; with human will and affections; with human capacity for suffering; in the world, yet unsullied by the world's taint.

A Life showing in itself the possibilities of our nature as God made it; a Life fulfilling man's destiny—fellowship with God through the way of sorrow.

It is the Life of God made Man; of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man—"Very God of Very God,"—and yet bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

We saw Him in boyhood and we saw Him, last Sunday, touching the joys of life; in a humble home and amid humble surroundings, manifesting forth His glory in His first miracle of power.

To-day He touches another of our common possessions —sorrow, which is no respecter of class or age, which binds all, from the highest to the lowest, in the common bond of suffering.

Christ came "down from the mountain" where He had been teaching the people. The pure, unsullied, perfect Life mixes with the world's life, and meets—what?—the sorrows of life.

There are two scenes—

(1) The leper, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

The leper is the type of man under the dominion of sin; of man laden

(*a*) With the disease of sin;
(*b*) With the infirmities which are consequent upon his fallen condition.

To him comes an Epiphany of power, or rather of glory with mingled rays of power and love.

"If Thou wilt" conveys almost an expression of doubt as to the willingness of Christ to heal.

The answer reveals willingness, love, power. "I will; be thou clean."

He Who by His Almighty power has changed the water into wine, now, by His touch, changes the leper into a

sound and perfect man. The touch is the outward sign of the compassion which He felt.

(2) The Centurion draws near with humility and faith, seeking relief for the servant dear to him.

In him we see the whole Gentile world personified, seeking help under the common lot of sorrow, using almost the words of the Collect, "Stretch forth Thy Right Hand to help and defend us."

As to the leper, so to the Centurion, there is an Epiphany, first of love, then of power.

"I will come"—the quickest, readiest sympathy; "and heal him"—the Almighty power to save.

Of palsy or paralysis also it may be said that it is typical of sin, the disease being manifested in its consequences.

The sufferer becomes, in greater or less degree, incapable of moving; his body, in severe cases, is in one sense dead.

In the case of both the leper and the paralytic, Christ manifested His glory in the exhibition of His Almighty power. He mercifully looked upon the infirmities of the sufferers, stretching forth His Right Hand to help and deliver them.

They are the very words of the Collect. Man in his fallen state is the same; man's disease of sin is the same; the infirmities consequent upon sin, leading man into dangers and necessities, are the same.

And Christ is the same: His love the same; His willingness the same; His power the same.

In us there may still be an Epiphany of the purifying, transforming power of Christ, if only we—

(i.) Come to Him;
(ii.) Bring humility and faith;
(iii.) Obey His commands—"Show thyself to the priest." "Go thy way."

The Epistle undoubtedly illustrates the "infirmities" which are the result of sin, and the dangers to which those infirmities expose us.

"The act of regeneration is instantaneous. After this the old dead nature does indeed remain round about the regenerate soul, and miserably baffles it, but the gift of life is divine from the beginning."[1]

Again, sin, even though pardoned through the Sacrament of Penance, leaves its mark upon the character, weakens the will, lessens the power of resistance, deadens zeal, hinders self-knowledge.

This weakness exposes us to danger from the assaults of evil, and from the baffling of former temptations, whereby Satan seeks to terrify the soul and bring it back into its former bondage.

Hence come our necessities, arising from our dangers. We need help, we need support, we need sympathy.

We find all in the "Almighty and Everlasting God," Who is willing "mercifully to look upon our infirmities," and is ready "in all our dangers and necessities to stretch forth His Right Hand to help and defend us."

Dangers we must encounter, necessities we must experience, since discipline is needed for our perfecting. We pray, not to be delivered "from," but to be delivered "in," the dangers which await us as we follow Christ.

The Blessed Sacrament is God's provision for the needs of man.

[1] Rev. R. M. Benson.

How wonderful it all is! Jesus "comes down," and the "great multitudes" of the Catholic Church throng His Presence.

All lives, with their varied histories, draw near to the One Life; all sullied, but His unsullied; all weakened by sin, but His the Life of perfect strength; all in danger, all compassed with necessity.

He, the Rock of our Salvation, Who, out of the fulness of His love, "distributes to the necessity" of the brethren.

The sinner, conscious of his sin, draws near to Him, with a faith as yet imperfect. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

It is no small step towards recovery to be conscious of the need of cleansing, and to realise that cleansing is to be found in Jesus only.

The power of the Lord is present to heal, but Christ uses means. Amid all the variety of means employed by Christ when on earth, the one prominent and present thing is the Right Hand, the power of God in Him.

It is not left to us to choose or invent the means whereby the Right Hand shall be extended to us. *Each* had to do what was bidden *him; to us* the *same* means are commanded *alike to all.* We must use them if we would be healed.

As Christ employed the Jewish priesthood for the only function it was competent to discharge, to certify the fact of a cure, so He employs the Christian priesthood for the function which He has empowered it to fulfil, not only to certify the fact, but to administer the means "of the forgiveness of sins."

Consider the marvels of the Holy Eucharist. Think of

the sins, the infirmities, the dangers, the necessities of but one life—your own.

Add to that the dangers and necessities of the lives dear to you, which you are allowed to lay before the Presence of Jesus. "My loved one lieth at home."

Picture to yourself the wants, uttered or unuttered, expressed or only breathed in prayer, of a whole congregation kneeling at the feet of Jesus.

And yet all known, all weighed, all felt by Him with a sympathy which is active; all comprehended by Him with a love which is only equalled by His power. "I will; be thou clean." "I will come and heal him."

In *Preparation*—

"Lord, I am not worthy, but speak the word only, and Thy servant shall be healed."

In *Communion*—

"Quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy word."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"I will give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God."

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

The Collect.—O God, Who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. xiii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. viii. 23.

A fresh Epiphany; a twofold manifestation of the power of the Incarnate Son:

I. Over the forces of nature;
II. Over the powers of evil which have taken possession of man's spiritual being.

There is infinite comfort in the remembrance that He Who thus manifests His Omnipotence is He Who was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

He went through the "many and great dangers" with which we are compassed. He took that nature the frailty of which we acknowledge. He experienced those temptations through which we pray Him to "carry us" in His Almighty arms.

I. The Gospel tells us of Christ in the vessel, asleep in the midst of the storm. He was wearied with work and exposed to danger.

His disciples suffer from the temptation of want of faith. Their faith is weak, it cannot "always stand upright."

They cry to Him for protection, "Lord, save us," and their appeal is heard. He rebuked them for want of faith, and then "rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm."

They learn the lesson that for His Church, as for them, safety, strength, protection are to be found in His Presence.

The ship of Christ's Church can ride safely through the storm of this world, because she has the promise of Christ's abiding Presence within her.

We are safe in spite of gathering storms and the raging billows which threaten to wreck our lives, if Christ abides in the weak vessel of our life.

> "My Presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest." "There was a great calm."

We find rest, we find "a great calm," as we cherish the Presence of Jesus in our souls; as we kneel in the Sacred Presence on the Altar; as we hear the words spoken to ourselves—

> "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul into everlasting life."

"Why are ye fearful," He says to us, "O ye of little faith?" "Lord, increase our faith."

II. Christ, having manifested His Omnipotence over the forces of nature, is met by a display of the powers of the spiritual enemies of man's soul.

"Two possessed with devils coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce."

An awful picture of the effects of sin indulged multiplying in the soul of man: in St. Mark we read, "My name is Legion: for we are many."

The soul "dead in trespasses and sins," becomes active in evil, devilish, unsatisfied unless harm can be done to others.

The consciousness of the claims of Christ still survives—"Jesus, Thou Son of God,"—but exists only as "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

The manifestation of power. The devils are cast out; the possessed are set free and restored. The world speaks of "hopeless cases," yet they are not beyond the Almighty power of the Present Christ.

The Gergesenes besought Him to depart; we may pray Him to "abide with us," because apart from Him there is no salvation, no strength, no protection.

Consider the fearful danger of rejecting Christ; trying to drive Him from us, because we fear His Presence which reveals and rebukes our sin, asking rather to be left to ourselves, to the continuance of our sins, and—though we recognise it not—to the companionship of devils.

> "O Lord, my God, lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."

The connection of the Epistle is perhaps difficult to trace. It puts before us the duties and responsibilities of our position, basing the duty of obedience to external authority upon the supreme power of God, of which we have seen the manifestation in the Gospel:

> "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

If we do well, those in authority are "the ministers of God" to us "for good." If we do evil, they are still "the ministers of God" for the punishment of those who do evil—

> "For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

God's power is supreme; He is the source of all authority and power; appointing, directing those who execute authority by His commission, therefore "render to all their dues."

Our responsibility in such matters naturally exposes us to temptations: to forget the source of authority, to minimise the claims, even to refuse obedience to lawful demands.

Yielding to such temptations leads us into dangers: "they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation."

Hence the prayer of the Collect, applicable to these as to even weightier subjects;

> "Grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations."

There is hardly one of the Collects which appeals more forcibly to us, for it expresses so fully the cry of our human nature, of our experience.

> "Your Heavenly Father *knoweth* that ye have need."
> "O God, Who *knowest* us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers."

There is at once our strength and our comfort. God knows.

God has assured us of His knowledge by the Incarnation of His Son, Who came to share with us the "many and

great dangers." We have only to study His Life in the Holy Gospels to see how perfect is the knowledge acquired by experience. We have only to contemplate the lives of His Apostles to see portrayed the perils of our own position as followers of the Lord Jesus.

Satan tempts; the world allures; the flesh betrays. Faith fails; courage wanes; hope languishes. The powers of evil take possession of the citadel of our lives.

From man tempted, man storm-tossed, man under the dominion of evil, yet wishing to be free, goes up the cry:

> "O God, Who knowest that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright."

"Cannot *always* stand upright;" we plead our frailty, and in pleading it we plead, too, the knowledge of God our Father, and out of our frailty build a claim upon His strength and protection.

"Cannot *always* stand upright." Alas, if we put our own experience into words, would it not be "I rarely stand upright; I am always falling"?

Consider the marvellous faith which the last clause of the Collect involves: "Grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in *all* dangers, and carry us through *all* temptations."

"There is no power but of God," and the power of God *can*, we acknowledge, support even us, with our avowed frailty, in all dangers, and carry even us, with all our weakness consequent upon past yielding, through all temptations.

The power of God can only be equalled by His willingness and His love.

The Blessed Sacrament is the answer of God to the cry of frail humanity. There His Incarnate Son, Who was

"tempted in all points like as we are," meets His tempted followers. There He Who calmed the waters of the Sea of Galilee reveals His Presence to His brethren in the storm-tossed bark of His Church.

> "O Lord God of Hosts, Who is like unto Thee: Thou rulest the raging of the sea; Thou stillest the waves thereof when they arise."

Blessed indeed are they who in all dangers, trials, sorrows, and temptations seek shelter in the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. "By Thy temptation, by Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, Good Lord, deliver us."

And strength comes from union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He says to us, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." We own the frailty of our human nature, and we unite ourselves with the strength of His nature, human and Divine.

> "I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

Resolve—

(i.) To live close to God, knowing the violence of the dangers in which you stand, and the frailty of your own nature.

(ii.) To be regular at the Holy Eucharist, that there you may obtain strength and protection.

(iii.) To cherish the Presence of Jesus in your soul.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

The Collect.—O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and household continually in Thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Col. iii. 12. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xiii. 24.

For four Sundays the Church has led us to consider past manifestations of our Blessed Lord; now we turn to manifestations which are present, and yet to be fulfilled in the future.

To-day we deal with both: the manifestation of Christ in His Church now; the manifestation of Christ as the Judge of the Church in the future.

The Collect gives us the keynote. "We beseech Thee, to keep Thy Church and household continually in Thy true religion."

Take both the words used, Thy "Church," and "household." Those "called out" of the world; the body of the faithful, the very Body of Christ, because admitted into union with Him through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Thy "household"; admitted into the family of God through incorporation with His Son; "members of Christ," and therefore "children of God."

> "We have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

As members of the Church and the household of God we inherit the privileges and responsibilities which attach to our position.

The Faith has been committed to the Church. Christ has made her the guardian of His Sacraments. We are responsible for the use made of sacramental grace, and for the upholding of the Catholic Faith as contained in the Creeds.

The Latin original of the Collect prays that God would keep us "*continua pietate*," continually with His Fatherly goodness. The relationship of God to us, as our Father, was thus emphasised :—

> "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him."

The Church and household of God are to be kept continually in His true religion: the Faith, the whole Faith, and nothing but the Faith.

The Incarnation, the Manifestation of Christ in the Flesh, is the foundation of the Catholic Faith.

He is manifested in the Sacraments of His Church, and through sacramental union to be manifested in the lives of the household of God.

Religion in practice is the evidence of the faith duly cherished.

> "When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me."
>
> "When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth."

It is His Presence which is to keep the Church and household of God continually in true religion.

Note the attitude of the members of the household of God. They lean upon the hope of heavenly grace and rely upon the mighty power of the Head of the Church.

It implies faith in the present work of Christ; confidence in Him as the Spiritual Rock whence flow the abundant streams of grace; assurance of His ability and willingness to uphold.

The Epistle continues the same thought, for the Apostle addresses the members of God's household as the "elect of God, holy and beloved"; sanctified through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

As such He urges them to the performance of Christian duties and the manifestation of Christian virtues—kindness, humility, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, charity.

> "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in *one body;* and be ye thankful."

Whence shall the members of the Church obtain these graces, and the power wherewith to resist temptations, within and without?

From Christ manifesting His love and power in the Sacraments, and from the Holy Spirit Whose fruits are love, joy, peace — the very virtues which the Apostle describes.

The unkept garden of man's soul brings forth only weeds, but the garden of the Lord, upon which He has breathed, is beautiful with the flowers of grace.

Christ, the Gardener of the soul, works ever patiently in that garden, seeking to bring forth fruit to perfection.

"Forgiving one another; . . . even as Christ forgave

you, so also do ye." Christ ever forgiving us in the Sacrament of Penance.

How in the Blessed Sacrament we find both the Example and the Fount Whence flows the grace to fashion us into the Heavenly Pattern.

There we find Jesus, Who is "rich in mercy," humble, long-suffering; Who bears long with us and forgives our coldness. There we find Him Who is perfect Charity.

We find Him there, not merely that we may worship Him and gaze upon the beauty of His Holiness, but we find Him willing to unite Himself with us that He may work in us abundantly and supply all our need.

Through that union comes to us "the peace of God," which is to rule our hearts, and which is the final benediction of our Eucharist, our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving—

> "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God."

Through our Communion "the Word of Christ" dwells in us, and we grow in wisdom, and we are enabled to sing "with grace in our hearts to the Lord."

Through the present life of Jesus thus sacramentally conveyed to us we may be enabled to do all, in word and deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks to God the Father by Him in the Holy Eucharist.

What a marvellous picture it is of the life of the household of God, nourished by sacramental grace, manifesting the Life of Jesus, presenting a perpetual Eucharist to the Father by Him, the Son, of Whom we are the members.

The Gospel sums up, as in a picture, the thoughts

already presented to us. The field is the Church; the Man Who sows the seed, ever working, is Jesus Christ our Lord.

The enemy sows the tares—the false wheat which so closely resembles the true that at first it escapes notice.

The servants impulsively desire to root up the tares, but the Master of the field, with Divine Wisdom, and in the exercise of His authority, forbids, lest injury be done to the precious wheat for which He has laboured, and for the ripening of which He watches with such patient, anxious care.

He has patience with all; He looks forward to the end—"Let both grow together until the harvest."

He reveals Himself as the Supreme Ruler of His Church *now*, and He reveals to us the purpose of His future manifestation. Then He shall appear as our Judge.

> "In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn."

Then shall be manifested the purpose and the result of all the patient work of the Heavenly Husbandman, of the outpouring of His "heavenly grace," of His Life in the Sacraments of the Church which is His Body. The household of God shall rest in the Eternal Home.

"Safe Home, safe Home at last."

Then shall the Heavenly threshing floor resound with songs of praise to Christ, the Head, the Lord, the Judge of all.

Ah, we say, if only I may attain; if only I could be loving, forbearing, forgiving, charitable, humble, meek!

The Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament convinces us of sin. We are so unlike Him Who waits for us there.

Yes, we are; but as there is forgiveness for the past, so is there grace for those who lean upon the Beloved. The hindrance to grace is our unfitness to receive.

He is ever sowing the good seed; He is ever willing to work in the field of our souls; but so often, "He can do no mighty works there" because of our unbelief, our lack of preparation.

Strive before approaching God's Altar to test the produce of the field of your soul. Christ has sown good seed; from whence then has it these tares?

"The most dangerous temptations, and the most subtle sins, perhaps one may say the prevalent evils of the world, are phases, perversions, prostitutions, exaggerations of what is good."

The Epistle teaches us the characteristics of the good seed, and by its teaching we can fitly examine self.

In Christ dwells the fulness of all virtue, and He waits to communicate to us as we are fit to receive.

Bring to Him

(i.) Sorrow for the evil growths within the soul which dishonour the garden of the Lord.

(ii.) Faith in His Presence in His Church, and in His care for you as a member of the household of God.

(iii.) Thanksgiving for the hope of His Heavenly grace, and for His patient dealing with your soul in preparation for His Manifestation in Judgment.

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

The Collect.—O God, Whose Blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious Kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. John iii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xxiv. 23.

The final Manifestation, the Manifestation of the Son of Man in Judgment. This is the climax of the sequence through which we have passed.

The Epiphany at Bethlehem is not complete until He Who there appeared in lowly childhood "shall appear again with power and great glory."

All things, as the years pass by, are moving onward in one long progressive Epiphany in which Christ is gradually making clear His purpose and His power.

The final judgment shall be the culmination and completion, the full Epiphany of the Son of God and of the sons of God, His members; of eternal life inherited, and of Satan and his works destroyed.

The Collect follows directly upon the teaching of last Sunday. The Blessed Son of God "was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life;" members of the Church and household of God mentioned in last Sunday's Collect.

Then we spoke of "the hope of Thy heavenly grace," upon which, in our time of probation, we are to lean; now we pray that "having this hope," that is, the hope of eternal life as joint heirs with Christ, "we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure."

Our thoughts are led *onward*, to the future and complete manifestation, "with power and great glory."

Note the word "power." Last Sunday we prayed to "be defended by Thy mighty power." It was by the manifestation of power that the works of the devil were destroyed, as we saw in some of the Gospels for the present season. Hereafter shall be seen the triumph of the power of the King, in His glorified Church, and in the lives of the individual members of His household.

Having been purified here by His discipline and training, through the Sacraments of His holy Church, our final hope is that "we may be made like Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom."

Can hope and longing and expectation further go? To be like Christ in His kingdom! To have the Christ-life manifested in us perfectly!

> "Father, I will that they also, Whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me."

The Collect is founded on the Epistle. The Apostle of love teaches us of the Divine love. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God."

It is of the love of God that He sent His Son; it was of the love of God that we, through union with Him, were made the sons of God. The fundamental truth of our position, now and hereafter, is the love of God.

"It does not yet appear what we shall be." The principle of progressive manifestation is maintained. He who is filled with the precious hope of future likeness to his Lord purifies himself *now*, seeking through sacramental grace an increasing growth in holiness, that hereafter he "may see Him as He is."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." What a call to self-discipline, to the following of Jesus in the way of the Cross, hoping only one day to "see Him as He is."

There is to be no hiding of stern facts, no palliating the nature of sin or its guilt, no forgetfulness of its consequences.

> "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."
>
> "Let no man deceive you: he that committeth sin is of the devil."

We sin lightly, thoughtlessly; we excuse ourselves for our sins; we even draw near to His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament with sin unconfessed, and so unforgiven.

The Sinless One was manifested that He might meet and conquer Satan and destroy his works.

Sin, our sin, caused the sorrows of the life of Jesus, the agonies of the Passion, His death on Calvary.

> "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Self-examination reveals to us our sins, that is, the works of the devil within ourselves. Through our confessions, through the power of the Precious Blood, through our strivings after holiness, as we co-operate with the grace given to us, the Son of God manifests His power in the destruction of the works of the devil which His Spirit reveals to us.

In view of the future Epiphany, when in the Presence of the Son of Man, the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed—

> "Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ your Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries."

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us," that as His sons we should have such opportunities of preparation for the final manifestation of our Judge as we find in His Presence with us in the Eucharist.

Before we draw near to Him we strive to "purify ourselves," because we know that "He is pure." His love is ever drawing us onward to greater effort, and offering us increasing manifestations of His glory as we grow in likeness to Himself.

The Gospel contains His own revelation of His final coming, the culmination of His manifestations.

It is the Son of Man Who will come; He Whose manhood is the witness to His love; Who by virtue of His manhood, has known human life with its opportunities, its temptations, trials, and conflicts.

He Who was manifested as the Saviour of the world will then be manifested as its Judge. He Who was manifested in weakness will then be revealed in power.

He has manifested Himself "in the secret chambers" of the individual soul; in the joys as in the vicissitudes of life; in His approach to us in the Sacraments of His Church. But then He will be manifested to all. Every eye shall see Him, and every heart shall be open before His gaze.

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." "O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed the world; save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord"—

> "King of Majesty tremendous,
> Who dost free salvation send us,
> Fount of Pity, then befriend us."

"And He shall send His Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the elect," those whom He has chosen, called out of the world into the household of God.

We shall be there; *we* shall be judged by our sonship, by our opportunities, by all His patient dealing with us in His Church, by our Confessions, our Communions, by His progressive manifestations to our individual souls.

> "Righteous Judge! for sin's pollution
> Grant Thy gift of absolution,
> Ere that day of retribution."

The Eucharist is the preparation for the Judgment. The Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is the preparation for His future manifestation. It is the same Christ, here veiled, there revealed. He comes and He passes judgment now, for each approach to His Altar is a rehearsal of the final Judgment.

Meditate upon the supreme love of God Who has provided His sons with such means of grace. He prepares us for admission to His unveiled Presence. He gives us strength through union to destroy the works of the devil; He purifies us and makes us increase in likeness to His Son. "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

In *Preparation*—

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try out my reins and my heart. For Thy loving-kindness is ever before mine eyes."

In *Communion*—

"My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?"

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help: and whose hope is in the Lord his God."

"The Lord looseth men out of prison: the Lord giveth sight to the blind."

"The Lord thy God, O Sion, shall be King for evermore: and throughout all generations."

Septuagesima

The Collect.—O Lord, we beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. ix. 24. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xx. 1.

The days of manifestation are over; we come within the approaching shadow of Lent. The seventieth, sixtieth, fiftieth day, and then Lent or Carême—which is the corruption of Quadragesima—the forty days of Lent.

The Church has shown us Christ coming to us, and manifesting Himself to us. Now she teaches us what fallen man is, what his life is here, what it may be.

Seventy days, seventy years, the three score and ten years of the Psalmist: each day brings us nearer to Good Friday, the day of death, through which we pass to resurrection.

Note the lessening number of the days as the season passes on towards its appointed end, but bear in mind Good Friday is not the real ending; beyond death is Easter and the Resurrection Morn.

Septuagesima shows the life of fallen man as it is, the life of work, pictured in the Gospel.

Sexagesima, the life of faith which may, through grace, be our life here.

Quinquagesima, the heavenly life, the life of love, to which man may attain by the power of the Holy Ghost.[1]

The Collect is the expression of those who having seen the wonder of the love of God in sending His Son, and of the love of God the Son in coming to manifest the Father, have become conscious of their own fallen condition, of their own shortcomings and sins against such love.

We are God's people, even though we are a rebellious people. He has made us His children by adoption and grace, and as the people of His covenant we beseech Him to hear our cry—

> "We beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people."

We cannot draw near to His Footstool without the acknowledgment of sin, and of the penalty which by sin we have rightly incurred. "We who are justly punished for our offences."

Not only who *deserve* to be punished, but *are* justly punished. We do not always recognise the penalty, but it is there, and we are moving onwards towards death, which is the ultimate penalty all have to pay for sin.

"We indeed justly." It required the Cross to make the dying thief acknowledge sin and the justice of his penalty. The Cross and the discipline of the Cross are needed often to bring us to a true confession.

"There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous:" but "the goodness of God endureth yet daily." Therefore with conviction of sin, and consciousness of the punishment which rests upon us while sin remains unfor-

[1] Rev. A. Jukes.

given, we pray that we "may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness."

The perfect motive is put before us. We pray to be delivered, not merely for our own sakes, not that we may be let off—may escape that which we fear to undergo; no, we are to be delivered "for the glory of Thy Name"—

(*a*) That God may be glorified in the exhibition of His Goodness.

(*b*) That He may be glorified in the ransomed lives of those who are His people.

The Epistle and Gospel tell us the necessity of *discipline* and *work*.

Man in his fallen condition prays to be delivered by God's goodness, but in order that his deliverance may be accomplished there must be man's endeavour. He cannot stand idle. Work has to be done, and work begins at home, in the subjugation of the body.

For this subjugation there are needed:

1. Continuous effort. There can be no pause, no uncertainty or vacillation in running the race; "so run that ye may obtain."
2. Temperance or self-restraint: the curb upon the natural desires; "temperate in all things."
3. Mortification. "I keep under (buffet) my body and bring it into subjection."
4. Consciousness of danger of lessened earnestness—"lest that by any means . . . I myself should be a castaway."
5. Assurance of the reward. "But we an incorruptible" crown.

We must accept the struggle, and the pain of the struggle, as part of the penance which our offences have justly deserved.

The Gospel tells of work to be done in the vineyard of God.

Note that wherever in the Holy Gospels God's Kingdom is spoken of as a vineyard, it is associated with the thought of work. In a vineyard work is continuous from the first shooting of the vine until the vintage; ground must be broken up; weeds be cleared away lest they should choke the young shoots; plants must be trained; there can be no cessation of work if the crown of success is to be won.

The vineyard is the householder's; he hires the labourers. God is the Lord and Master, we are His people; He hires men into His vineyard, and He appoints the wages. The penny is stamped with His image; the final reward is likeness to Himself.

Note the persistency of God's call; "he went out early," at the third, sixth, ninth, and even the eleventh hour.

Men are standing idle in the market-place of the world, all the day of life standing idle, and yet God "goes out" to call them, seeking to induce them to work in His vineyard:

(*a*) The vineyard of man's own soul,
(*b*) The vineyard of the Church.

Man must have learnt to work, to regard his own soul as God's vineyard, and to work with self-discipline therein, before he can duly work in the vineyard of the Church.

The temptation of the present day is to reverse the order; to gratify the desire for occupation in multiplicity of activities, but to neglect the sterner work of self-discipline. Much so-called work is, after all, "standing idle" in the sight of the Householder.

The call has been persistent throughout our lives. In

youth, maturity, old age, it has been the same; and we know not whether, with us, it is the third, sixth, ninth, or eleventh hour. God only sees how long our day of opportunity is to last.

So many past Lents, in each of which we have been called to the work of discipline and penance; to work in our own souls, to work for Christ in His Church, to follow Him Who said, "My Father worketn hitherto, and I work."

God is ever working, and inviting man to co-operation; man loving idleness, puts off the commencement of the work.

The awfulness of the warning, "Many be called, but few chosen."

We never feel so conscious of sin or of the punishment which it has justly incurred, as when we kneel in the Presence of God before the Altar.

There His goodness and the persistency of His love is manifested to us, as He stoops to hear the feeble prayers of His people.

There He has come so often to call us into His vineyard; there He bids men unite themselves with the sacrifice of His Son that they may be enabled to "present their bodies a living sacrifice."

There, working mightily with them, He strengthens them for the work which He calls upon them to do.

The work may be hard, the penance may be severe, the sacrifice may be great, but the glory of the sacred Presence enfolds the offerer, and the impossible becomes possible when the motive becomes clear, "for the glory of Thy Name."

Resolve, at the Holy Eucharist, in anticipation of Lent—

(i.) To pray for conviction of sin as an offence against the love and patience of God.

(ii.) To pray for grace to hear and respond to His voice which calls to you, remembering that "the time is short."

(iii.) To offer self to the holy will of God, for such penance, discipline, and work, as He may appoint.

Sexagesima

The Collect.—O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do; Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—2 Cor. xi. 19. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke viii. 4.

Septuagesima told us of work—and work there must be—but work has its dangers; even self-discipline has its dangers, and that which should be for the soul's advancement may prove adverse to its real good.

The Church, with true knowledge of our spiritual life, and desire for our preservation from the subtle dangers which beset us, bids us pray—

> "O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do."

Self-confidence, trust in our work and in the things which we do, would be adverse to our spiritual progress, and so we pray to be defended against this, and all other forms of "adversity," by the power of God.

We have been taught enough during Christmas and Epiphany to assure us of the *willingness* of God to preserve us; now we ask, as His people, for the exercise of His *power*.

The temptation to self-confidence is so common, and so directly emanates from the enemy of our souls.

We make rules, and by force of will we keep them, and in the fact of keeping find satisfaction.

The object of the rule was not merely its perfunctory performance, but growth in virtue and in union with God. We lose sight of the object in self-confident reliance upon performance of the letter of the rule:

> "These have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

The enemy of our souls turns our very efforts into weapons against us, through the insidiousness of pride. He makes "the things that should have been for our wealth to be unto us an occasion of falling."

The object of Lent is not the keeping of rules, but the growth of the soul, through rules and discipline in likeness to the Crucified Lord.

The Epistle containing the life, history, and claims of St. Paul, might at first sight seem to convey a contradiction; he might be said to be boasting of what he was, of what he had done and suffered, and so to be self-confident:

> "Out of his jealousy over the Corinthians, who seemed to make more account of the false apostles than of him, he entereth into a forced commendation of himself, of his equality with the chief apostles, showing that he was not inferior to those deceitful workers in any legal prerogative, and in the service of Christ, and in all kinds of sufferings for his ministry, far superior" (Heading of 2 Cor. xi., A.V.).

He records his ministry, showing, first, what he had *done*, and then how little he trusted in his doings—"I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities."

He seeks not to glorify himself by the record of his sufferings, but he seeks that others may glorify God in him.

We may consider the record as illustrating the need of the life of discipline.

The "chosen vessel" must pass through the furnace of suffering; the gold must be tried with the fire of affliction.

If the life of discipline was needed for the great Apostle of the Gentiles, surely it must be needed for us, who so often put our trust in the little that we do.

Yet he, by the power of God, was defended against all adversity. He was "chastened and not killed; sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing." His afflictions, which might have proved adverse, became steps to the altar of perfect self-sacrifice. "I am now ready to be offered."

God is the same; His grace is the same; that which He has done, He can and is willing to do. It is only we who are different, who shrink from the life of discipline and the way of the Cross, which is the way of glory.

The Gospel appears to contain a twofold reference—

(i.) To the adversities against which we pray to be defended.

(ii.) To the discipline which we have seen to be necessary.

(i.) In the parable of the sower, there are—

(*a*) The fowls of the air;

(*b*) The rocks on which the seed fails to germinate;

(*c*) The thorns, which springing up with the seed, render it unfruitful.

Consider their significance.

(*a*) The heart having grown hard and callous through the constant pressure of things worldly, the good seed which falls is trodden under foot; Satan is in readiness to snatch away the transient impression for good.

(*b*) The soil has never thoroughly been broken up; there has been no true work of penitence. Past Lents may have touched the surface, but the ground is rocky beneath. No dew of grace has fallen upon it, for the Sacraments have been neglected; the fire of temptation scorches, and the seed sown quickly withers.

(*c*) Cares and riches, and the pleasures of this world choke the growth of the seed. Self-confidence, springing up together with the resolutions, saps them of their vitality. There is a certain show of religion, but no fruit is brought to perfection.

Are not these three things "adversities"—things adverse to the soul's true life, from which we may well pray to be delivered by the power of the Heavenly Sower?

(ii.) But there is need of man's co-operation. We are not to sit idle and expect God alone to do the work. There must be the life of discipline.

(*a*) Man has by watchfulness to drive away the evil spirits which are intent upon the destruction of the seed sown within the soul. "In perils of robbers, in watchings often."

(*b*) Man has to break up the hard soil of his heart by repentance, by penance. The seed must be rooted, and it can only find soil fitted for its tender growth in a broken and contrite heart, softened by sacramental grace. "In hunger and thirst; in fastings often."

(*c*) The thorns must be plucked up by man's endeavour. They cling closely to the ground of

man's life, and the effort will be great and the pain may be severe, but they must be eradicated. "In weariness and painfulness."

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

They put not their trust in anything that they do, but they hear, they keep, and they bring forth fruit.

The parable is fulfilled at every Eucharist. "The Sower goes forth sowing," and the seed falls on varied soils. It is for us to say to which class we belong.

The Sower sets the example of work; He goes "out to sow His seed." It is for us to be up and doing, to co-operate with the work which in the Blessed Sacrament He seeks to do.

There must be the work of self-examination; there must be the work of prayer; there must be the work of resolution; there must be the work of continued discipline.

The ground must be made ready for the reception of the heavenly seed, or even that seed will be unfruitful; the power of God Himself will be limited by our want of preparation.

How awful is the responsibility of Communion, the reception of the seed sown by Christ the Sower.

With this consciousness we approach God's Altar. We have done what in us lies; we mean to do all that is in our power; we offer our penance, our sorrow, our crosses, but —we "put not our trust in anything that we do."

We are conscious in the Divine Presence and by the light of God's Holy Spirit of the things which hinder and are adverse to our progress, and we cast ourselves and our

efforts upon the Divine power, assured both of His will and His ability to preserve us.

In *Preparation*—
"I am come to sacrifice to the Lord."

In *Communion*—
"Fear not, I will help thee."

In *Thanksgiving*—
"My God shall be my strength."

Quinquagesima

The Collect.—O Lord, Who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth; Send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee: Grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. xiii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xviii. 31.

The Church leads us gradually onwards, and seeks to prepare us for the great season of opportunity, the forty days of Lent.

Her duty lies in the work of *preparation;* during these Sundays she is preparing us for Lent, that we may use it aright; in Lent she prepares us for the Easter Festival and our Easter Communion; by the seasons, as they pass, she is preparing us for eternity.

We have thought of the life of work, and of the life of discipline; for both there will be need this Lent. To-day the Church leads us to a higher theme—the life of love:

> "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

For the life of work there must be faith, faith in the Great Householder Who bids us go into His vineyard; but for work to be well and ungrudgingly done, faith must be quickened by love.

For the life of discipline there must be hope, or the soul will sink beneath the "weariness and painfulness," the adversities which withstand its endeavours.

But the present and most powerful support will be love to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; consciousness of His love, and the kindling of responsive love, as discipline fashions the soul in likeness to Him.

The Collect, which dates from 1549, "is formed on the basis of the Epistle, and is evidently constructed as a prayer for that love without which the discipline of Lent would be unavailing."[1]

It gives, in fact, the keynote for the whole of our observance of Lent, inasmuch as love is "the very bond of peace" and of those virtues to which we desire to attain. Without love, as the principle, it matters not what strictness of rule or what rigidness of outward observance we may practise; "whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee."

But how can we learn to love? Whence shall we, who know ourselves to be so cold and loveless, obtain the fire of a love capable of altering and influencing our whole lives?

We know what it is to love a human being; we know the love of a mother for her child; we have seen it influence and animate the life, moving to an intensity of self-sacrifice. But love to God, the All-holy, the Unseen, the Eternal, and the Just, how shall we attain to it?

(i.) God has stooped to win our love in the Incarnation. "God manifest in the flesh" is the Divine condescension to human weakness. The tempted, suffering, dying Christ is the embodiment of the love of God to tempted, suffering, dying man.

[1] Blunt's "Annotated Book of Common Prayer,"

(ii.) "God is Love" and "Love is of God." The very desire of loving God, and the power of loving God, flows from God Himself. Hence we say, "Send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity."

God's gift will be according to our willingness and capacity to receive: His willingness to give is unlimited.

The Epistle contains the most perfect description and picture of love the world has ever received. We have

(*a*) Its superiority proved by contrast.

Gifts of tongues or of prophecy, knowledge, that which is commonly called charity, and even faith itself, without love, are nothing, profit nothing.

(*b*) The analysis of love.

"The Spectrum of Love," says Professor Henry Drummond, "has nine ingredients":—

Patience . .	"Love suffereth long."
Kindness . .	"And is kind."
Generosity . .	"Envieth not."
Humility . .	"Vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."
Courtesy . .	"Doth not behave itself unseemly."
Unselfishness .	"Seeketh not her own."
Good Temper .	"Is not easily provoked."
Guilelessness .	"Thinketh no evil."
Sincerity . .	"Rejoiceth in the truth."

(*c*) The endurance of love. Prophecy, tongues, knowledge, all shall pass away, but "Charity never faileth."

Love which springs from God, and is the gift of God, can only find its ultimate satisfaction and perfection when it culminates in the love of God Himself; when, purified by the Spirit's work, it

meets and responds in perfect accord with the love of the Divine Being.

"Now we see through a glass darkly; but *then* face to face; now I know in part; but *then* shall I know even as also I am known."

The Gospel gives us the picture of the perfect example of love.

God has revealed Himself to us in His Son. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

And in the life of the Incarnate Son we have the perfect pattern of perfect love.

"I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do."

"Having loved His own, He loved them to the end."

There is no flaw in the perfect Love of Christ. You may take the nine points just enumerated and apply them to the Love of Christ, and you will find each fulfilled in Him. Of His Love, it is true, it "never faileth."

"Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem." They in ignorance, He with perfect knowledge of all that should happen to Himself.

He looks through the Passion to the joy of Resurrection, and Love illumines all.

For them, and for us, Love constrains Him to suffer; for them and for us He will rise again, that in them and in us His Love may be perfected.

In all our sufferings, in all our efforts to tread the heavenly path, in all our anticipations of coming agony, even of death itself, Love says, "Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem."

With the full consciousness of all which awaits Him, He yet can listen to the cry of the blind man who sat by the wayside begging. Nay, more, our Lord will not leave him until he has seen Love face to face.

What a picture of fallen mankind lying in darkness and craving for light, begging, and finding no satisfaction in what the world can offer.

What a picture of the Love of God Who sent His Son "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Love once kindled will not be denied—

> "They that went before rebuked him that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

The Divine Charity "suffereth long and is kind"—

> "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"
> "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

To persevering faith, and longing hope, and kindling love is the vision granted. "Receive thy sight."

O wondrous vision vouchsafed to the man who knelt at the Feet of Jesus! The first sight which meets the upturned eyes, long blinded, is the Face of Love Incarnate, Jesus, Lord and God.

"Faith is lost in sight, and patient hope is crowned," while love remains triumphant, for

> "He followed Him, glorifying God."

There is no more perfect form of self-examination before Communion than that contained in the Epistle.

Put before you—

(i.) The record of the Gospels;
(ii.) The Life of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Then take, clause by clause, the analysis of love which the Epistle contains :—

"Charity suffereth long,"—and I?
"Charity is kind,"—and I?
"Charity vaunteth not itself,"—and I?
Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has suffered long and been kind,—while I?

There can be no better preparation for Lent, for we learn thereby the perfections of the Divine Love, as it affects ourselves, our own short-comings, and the possibilities of attainment which through the operations of Divine Love are ours.

If I am the object of such Love, I must, cost what it may, strive to be worthy of it and capable of responding to it.

In preparation for this last Communion before Lent pray—

(i.) For light to behold the love of Jesus, which waits to be gracious;

(ii.) For grace to cast away all that hinders perfect love, *e.g.* self-love, love of ease, love of the world;

(iii.) For the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, that you may so use the opportunity of Lent that you may bring a full offering of love to your Risen Lord at Easter.

The First Sunday in Lent

The Collect.—O Lord, Who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—2 Cor. vi. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. iv. 1.

The Quinquagesima Collect gives the keynote to the whole of our devotions for Lent in preparation for our Easter Communion.

Love.—"Pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of Charity."

(*a*) Love towards God.
(*b*) Love towards man.

(*a*) "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son" to suffer for us—

(i.) Temptation, and the pangs of hunger and thirst;
(ii.) The Agony, and the Death upon the Cross.

We must therefore "love Him, because He first loved us."

(*b*) Being united in the fellowship of Christ, we must

(i.) Sorrow over our past sins of uncharity;
(ii.) Seek to be in charity with all men.

And so, with quickened love to God, and purified love

to man, we may hope to meet our loving and risen Lord in our Communion at Easter.

In special preparations for your Communions during the season of Lent, say

The Litany of the Blessed Sacrament;

Acts of Faith, Humility, Contrition, and Love;

The *Veni, Creator.*

The Collect is addressed to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

We come into *His* Presence: we come to receive *Him.*

What He was, that He is; "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

"For our sake" He fasted then; "for our sake" He comes in the Blessed Sacrament *now.*

Love calls for the correspondence of love.

But love manifests itself in likeness to the person loved.

Our human nature cannot of itself rise to such a possibility when the Person is Divine.

Therefore we pray, "Give us grace."

Christ meets us in the Blessed Sacrament, that through union with Him we may grow like to Him in

(i.) Subjugation of the lower nature;
(ii.) Love.

The desire to be like, and the power to become like, both come from God, and are the fruit of the work of God the Holy Ghost. "Thy godly motions." "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

The Spirit of God moves upon the dark surface of our

souls, moves them to their lowest depths, as we in humble penitence kneel before the Sacred Presence, enabling us

(i.) To wish to obey;
(ii.) To grow in obedience.

The life of "righteousness and true holiness" to the "honour and glory" of God the Father, is manifested to us in the life of Jesus Christ our Lord.

That life is with us on the altar.

The Church, by her priests, by the special opportunities she offers to us in Lent, working "together with Him," her Head, beseeches "you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

"Behold, now is the day of salvation."

This Lent, with its invitation of approach to the Sacraments, may be our last opportunity of yielding ourselves to the grace of God.

All through Lent we say the Collect for Ash Wednesday, which so plainly teaches us the true end of our Lenten rules and observances.

Because God loves, He is willing to forgive; in order that He may forgive we ask Him to "create and make in us new and contrite hearts."

But *we* have to be "workers together with God," "worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness."

This is something real and earnest; not the mere perfunctory performance of certain rules.

True, rules are essential, but rules are a means, not an end.

"May obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness." That is the true end.

It is the same thought which is expressed in the Collect for to-day. "Give us grace to use such abstinence." God gives grace, we use means.

But as the Epistle implies, a contest lies before us.

The Spirit of God moves us to endeavour, but endeavour will arouse opposition, and in the struggle will come suffering.

"Much patience" will be needed, even "labours," "watchings," "fastings."

We shall have to break the bonds of past "imprisonments," the fetters and chains of sin.

We shall have to prove our armour, and among our weapons must be fasting, self-denial, the lowering of the flesh.

Such is the teaching, by His own example, of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Such is the warning of His holy Church taught by His Holy Spirit.

> "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."

As the pattern of the life of "righteousness and true holiness" He obeys the "godly motions" of the Spirit.

As "the Captain of our salvation, bringing many sons into glory" He is made "perfect through suffering."

It was for our sake "He suffered being tempted."

In His temptation all temptation was included—

(i.) The lust of the flesh;
(ii.) The lust of the eyes;
(iii.) The pride of life.

His weapon, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

His thought, the "honour and glory" of God His Father.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

He comes in the Holy Eucharist to share with thee the temptations and the sufferings of the wilderness.

He comes to hold thee up in His own gracious hands, "lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

He, the Tempted, comes to be thy Shield and Buckler in the dark hours of thy conflict with the powers of evil.

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The angels who ministered to Him shall minister to thee, His servant, when thou art ready to faint beneath the weariness of strife.

In the presence of the tender love of Jesus,

(i.) Pray for—

(*a*) A tender spirit, that you may be conscious of the godly motions of the Spirit upon your soul;

(*b*) The illuminating power of the same Spirit, that you may see "no man save Jesus only";

(*c*) The guiding power of the same Spirit, that in the wilderness of the world, among all the temptations, dangers, sorrows of your life, you may be "led" by Him.

(ii.) Offer yourself, your desires, your sufferings, your trials, in union with Jesus in the Sacrifice of the Altar.

(iii.) Resolve: "I will worship the Lord my God, and Him only will I serve."

The Second Sunday in Lent

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Thess. iv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xv. 21.

A week's effort has sufficed to show us our incapacity. The "godly motions" of the Spirit have incited us to effort.

But the efforts have taught us that "we have no power of ourselves"—the best of lessons.

The vessel of man's life must be emptied of self before it can be filled with the Spirit.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Hopelessness is at once removed. God wills; God is on our side. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Prayer is the instrument which we have to use; acknowledging our helplessness, appealing for the exercise of His Almighty power.

Last week we prayed more especially for help in "Bodily Discipline"—"give us grace to use such abstinence."

This week we pray more especially for help in "Mental

Discipline"—"that we may be defended from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul."

The kingdom of thought, the realm of God; the scene of God's influential movement upon the soul of man; the realm in which His Spirit primarily works upon the individual soul.

To man was committed the charge of this realm, and man proved faithless to his trust.

Adam and Eve opened of their own will the gates to evil thoughts and imaginations, and so brought discord and ruin into the realm in which God once reigned alone and supreme.

It is a kingdom still, but a shattered kingdom.

It is the battle-ground of a hidden but momentous conflict—"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit."

Into this realm God comes, and His Spirit seeks to subdue the evil inclinations which prompt the evil thoughts.

He battles with the powers of darkness which whisper and suggest.

He tries to reveal to us the Beauty and the Love of Christ our Lord.

Contemplate our responsibility for the power of thought.

Whence spring actions, words?

Where is the fountain whence springs conscientious performance of duty?

The source is in the *thoughts* of man:

> "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things."
>
> "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts."

Every sin of word and deed has been first a sin of thought, then uttered in word, or expressed in action.

The Epistle begins with the fervent exhortation of St. Paul to his brethren, the Christian Thessalonians.

Those to whom he writes have received the gift of knowledge; they know how they "ought to walk and to please God."

They know the commandments which they have received at the Apostles' hands "by the Lord Jesus."

The law of the spiritual life is movement and progress.

> "As ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

The Church speaks with the authority of God, and is guided by the Holy Spirit.

> "We have forewarned you and testified. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, Who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit."

We cannot plead ignorance, for we are members of that same Holy Catholic Church, in which the authority and the guidance are still the same.

We are not ignorant of "how we ought to walk, and to please God." The test of our use of knowledge will be in abounding more and more.

The Epistle shows us the sins to which, by want of restraint and self-mastery in the realm of thought, men are led.

They are sins against the indwelling Presence, against the love of Him who is willing our sanctification.

The Gospel shows us the ultimate result—a soul possessed with an evil spirit, "grievously vexed of the devil."

It is no strange case, no impossible picture.

The man who yields his thoughts to evil, despising the Spirit and rejecting His godly motions, becomes possessed with evil.

The man who, in penitence, wishes to lead a new life, finds himself "grievously vexed of the devil," through the loss of thought-power, which previous betrayal has involved, and through the penalty of a vitiated memory.

> "Guard the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

In the Gospel, too, the confession of the Collect finds its echo.

> "We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves."
>
> "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."
>
> "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, *help me.*"

There was no help for her save in Him. "O go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand: and there is none to help me."

At first even "the Word has no word; the fountain is sealed; the Physician withholds His remedies."

But faith wins the desired boon. Faith, combined with emptiness of self and perseverance in prayer, prevails.

> "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."
>
> "When God delays a boon He does not therefore deny it."

1. Christ is the Eternal Thought of God.

When Incarnate He became the expression of that Thought—the Word of God.

His life, His words and actions, are the visible expression to us of the mind of God towards fallen man:

"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

In Him, as in a mirror, we see "how we ought to walk, and to please God."

Of Him it was said, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

The life of Jesus is perpetuated in the Blessed Sacrament.

2. Consider the thought of Jesus in instituting the Holy Eucharist.

(i.) The perpetual memorial before the Father.
(ii.) The satisfaction of the needs of His brethren.

He knew the battle which we should have to wage in the kingdom of our thoughts, and He knew our helplessness.

"O Thou, to Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts."

He knows the thoughts, and the individual need of cleansing, of each one who approaches Him in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

3. The whole desire of the Heart of Jesus is to purify, to fill with His sanctifying Presence, the kingdom of thought in each individual life.

Remember that as each of us is the expression of an eternal thought of God, so each of us is the present object of the thought of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

He desires to see the purpose of His Father fulfilled and perfected in each one of us His brethren.

"This is the Will of God, even your sanctification."

(i.) Pray for

(*a*) The purifying power of God the Holy Ghost;

(*b*) The illuminating power, whereby you may see yourself the object of the thought of eternal love;

(*c*) The controlling power, whereby you may rule in the kingdom of your thoughts.

(ii.) Strive, like the woman of Canaan, to present your needs to Jesus with faith, humility, and perseverance.

"Lord, help me!"

The Third Sunday in Lent

The Collect.—We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Ephesians v. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xi. 14.

Read Psalm cviii. 1, 6, 12, 13.

Psalm lx. 5, 11, 12.

The past is the picture of the present.

War must ever be the lot of God's chosen people.

"Look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants"—*humble*, because "vain is the help of man."

"Stretch forth the Right Hand of Thy Majesty," for "Thou savest by Thy Right Hand them which put their trust in Thee."

In this warfare "be ye followers of God, as dear children."

> "The Son of God goes forth to war;
> Who follows in His train?"

"Christ hath given Himself for us . . . a sacrifice to God."

"Every sacrifice must be salted with salt."

"If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

"Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies."

What is Lent? A time of spiritual conflict.

Hearty desire involves effort; effort involves conflict; conflict involves suffering.

I. See the condition of man's soul.

Who rules? God or Satan?

Do you rule in the home of your life, or are you the servant of sin, of habit, of sloth, or of indifference?

"When a strong man, armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."

Satan occupies the palace of the soul; through our neglect or treachery it has become his, and we live in a "false peace."

In Lent the "stronger than he" "passeth by." "Rise, He calleth thee."

"He that is not with Me is against Me."

"Through God we shall do great acts," *if* we be faithful to the call.

II. See the stress of the conflict.

Satan never gives up without rending the soul from which he is cast out.

We *want* to rule in the kingdom of our thoughts, and be masters in the realm of word and action, but fierce must be the struggle.

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

III. Note the enemies of whom the Collect speaks:

1. "Principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world."

The spiritual powers of evil, the *brain* of the attack which is directed against the soul of man. "The dragon fought and his angels."

"They seek the young Child"—the tender Christ-life within the soul—"to destroy Him."

2. The world—that in which we live and work. The surroundings of every life are preoccupied by the powers of evil, like the forts round a beleaguered city.

See how it encompasses us with—

(*a*) Its absorption in things transitory;
(*b*) Its indifference to religion;
(*c*) Its contempt for faith in a revelation;
(*d*) Its low standard of morality.

When a man hears the Voice, and wants to rise and follow the noble and the true, how terrible is the prospect.

The enemy holds the heights, the iron circle hems him round; "a host encompasseth the city."

Baffled, chilled, disheartened, man draws back into the citadel of his soul; and even here he is betrayed.

3. The flesh betrays him.

The powers of evil practise upon his natural love of ease; the passions of the lower nature are manipulated by the unseen forces of the foe.

He wants to be free, but hope seems vanishing.

> "Awake, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light."
>
> "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

4. The battle is not our battle, but God's battle.

Sin is God's enemy, and only our enemy because we belong to Him.

"Every movement of the conscience, every sense of usurpation, is not merely the revolt of our outraged soul; it is the claim of the true King upon His Kingdom, the call of the Monarch's trumpet claiming the right to occupy the citadel of man's life."

If on preceding Sundays we have learnt the duties of fasting and prayer, to-day we are taught the need of incessant watchfulness.

The Epistle and Gospel alike reveal to us—

(i.) Our position before God;

(ii.) The dangers incidental to our position.

In the Epistle we are told to be "followers of God as dear children."

We are those who "were sometimes darkness, but now are light in the Lord."

We are to "walk as children of light," having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" from which we have been delivered.

How it all points to the danger of being again overwhelmed by those "works of darkness," from which by our baptism we are set free.

How it all speaks of the need, on our part, of watchfulness and of effort.

In the Gospel our Blessed Lord depicts in parable the dangers of the soul from which the unclean spirit has "gone out"—

> "Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there."

The soul which has been cleansed must not be left "empty," unoccupied, "garnished" merely with "good resolutions."

The enemy is ever watching at the gate.

Into the soul from which Christ with "the finger of God" has cast out the unclean spirit, Satan will ever seek to return.

The casting out does not preclude the possibility of return.

Baptism does not preclude the possibility of sin.

Even those who are "inheritors" may fail to attain to their "inheritance in the Kingdom of God and of Christ."

> "Be ye therefore followers of God; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us."

So only may we be safe, and hope to attain.

Consider also how the power of the Right Hand of the Divine Majesty is depicted both in the Epistle and Gospel.

It was not by our strength that we were brought from darkness into light. "Goodness, righteousness, and truth" are not the natural fruit of human lives. They are "the fruit of the Spirit," the triumphs of Divine grace.

In the Gospel "Jesus was casting out a devil, and it was dumb."

"With the finger of God" ("The Spirit of God" in St. Matthew xii. 28) He "cast out devils."

> "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace, but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted."

Satan, as the strong man, held the palace of man's soul, but Christ, as the "stronger than he," has vanquished the powers of evil.

In the Holy Eucharist Christ comes to us, Who "also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God."

He comes to us Who is "the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle."

He comes to those whom He has Himself redeemed, who are conscious of the violence of the conflict, fearful of again falling beneath the yoke of evil.

He comes Who has said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne."

The conditions of victory are clearly defined—hearty desire, humility, effort.

In the Blessed Sacrament we find:

(*a*) The sympathy of Jesus with those who are striving to fulfil the conditions.

(*b*) Union with the Almighty power of His Right Hand.

1. Pray for—

(i.) The vision of His Majesty.
(ii.) Reliance upon His willingness to aid.
(iii.) Trust in the power of His Right Hand.

2. Resolve, "through God *will* I do great acts;" knowing that "it is He that shall tread down our enemies."

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

The Collect.—Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Epistle.—Gal. iv. 21. *The Gospel.*—St. John vi. 1.

The teaching of the Sundays in Lent is progressive, and is true to our experience.

We seek to respond to the godly motions of the Holy Spirit, and we become aware of our incapacity.

In struggling to advance we find the source of evil in the kingdom of thought.

We contemplate the enemies of our souls, and we find the wounds they have left upon our lives.

As we gradually draw near to the Cross, sin becomes more distinct in its guilt and in its consequences.

> "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished."

1. Consider the guilt of our sins, as members of Christ's Holy Catholic Church.

> "We, as Isaac was, are children of promise."

To us Christ has fulfilled His promises.

He has drawn nigh to us in Absolution.

He has not left us comfortless—He has ministered to us of His Holy Spirit.

He is with us always—in His Church and Sacraments.

And we—"do worthily deserve to be punished" for our sins against—

(i.) Light;
(ii.) Knowledge;
(iii.) Opportunity. Think of past Confessions and past Communions.

God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has been willing our salvation.

We have worshipped in the Presence of His Majesty; we have known the strength of His Right Hand.

And yet we have sinned. We have been so often near our Lord, and yet in heart so far from Him.

2. The consequences of sin.

Sin demands punishment. "The wages of sin is death."

We feel the bondage of sin. "Whoso committeth sin is the servant of sin."

We feel the shame of sin. "I am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

Beneath the weight of the guilt, and the bondage, and the shame of sin, we grow weary and faint by the way.

"But Jerusalem, which is above, is free; which is the mother of us all."

The yoke can be broken, the burden can be removed; there is liberty to be found.

We are not children of Agar, and therefore under

bondage; we are the children of the heavenly city, the Church of the living God: "then are the children free."

We pray that we, "by the comfort of Thy grace, may mercifully be relieved."

Comfort and relief. Not merely the taking away of the punishment due; not merely the removal of the burden of guilt; not merely the alleviation of weariness.

"Christ not only forgives, He restores. His comfort is not only in soothing, but in strengthening."

This is the meaning of the word. Comfort, com-fort, means strong-together-with.

"To comfort is to aid. This is the 'comfort of His grace,' that we in penitence desire—His absolving, pardoning, and freeing word."[1]

"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

The Gospel for Refreshment Sunday tells of the feeding of the five thousand.

They followed Jesus; they were on their way up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.

Christ upon the mountain looked down upon the multitude, His heart filled with compassion.

Note our Lord's universality of compassion.

The motives and the needs of those who followed Him were all different; but He knew all, and had compassion upon all.

Their unity in one point—weariness.

They were all weary beneath the burden of thirst and heat; weak through want of food; faint by reason of the length of the way.

[1] Bishop Doane.

Think of the weariness of so many among ourselves.

(i.) In the life of the world—premature weariness a common feature.

The hurry of the world. We crowd everything into such a short space of time; complain of satiety as each new scene or excitement palls on jaded senses.

(ii.) In the spiritual life—

Wearied with that which is external, the controversies of the day.

Wearied with that which is internal, the struggle within the soul; the burden of sin; the unsatisfactoriness of our efforts to be free; the fighting against conviction; the perpetual temptation to give up, and to be content with the gratification of the lower nature.

Christ draws near in the Blessed Sacrament.

His sympathy with the weary is unwearied and inexhaustible. His desire to be their Rest is unceasing. His power is "mighty to save":

> "Come unto Me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

It tells of rest, it tells of refreshment; but it tells of a way, a life, in which refreshment is needed, in which struggle and endeavour, with their consequences, are inevitable.

"Make the men sit down." And then, by the hands of the ministry, commissioned by Him to be the channels of His gifts, He feeds them.

He feeds us out of the abundance of His riches, knowing, as none else can know, the nature of the trial which presses most heavily upon us.

It was just because He saw the urgent need of the

people following Him that He had compassion upon them.

It is just because He sees our particular state of need this Mid-Lent Sunday that He says, "Make the men sit down."

It is exactly what we want—if we will give ourselves time to think.

We feel the stress of the conflict, and we feel the length of the way. We know, if Lent is not to be wasted, and if we *are* to make a good Communion at Easter, that there is more to be done than we have yet accomplished.

"Rest," He says, "that thou mayest gain strength for further endeavour."

"Rest with Me, in My Presence. Let Me feed you with the heavenly Food that you may receive strength for the heavenly journey."

We offer to Him our efforts so far, our desires, even our defeats. He will change weakness into strength, repulses into victory.

And all the time we are saying to ourselves, "We do worthily deserve to be punished."

But He says, "Make the men sit down that *I* may feed them."

"It is the change from the active and restless to the receptive and quiet state; from the condition in which all the life is flowing outward, to the other condition in which the life is being influenced, that is, being flowed upon by the richer power which comes forth from Him."[1]

What words of ours can portray the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, or the richness of the gifts which there He bestows upon His servants!

[1] Bishop Phillips Brooks.

1. Pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit—

(i.) That you may realise the evil of sin in yourself;
(ii.) That you may see the glory of that liberty which Christ offers;
(iii.) That you may hear the Voice which calls you, in your weariness, to your true and only rest.

2. Resolve, "I will confess my sins unto the Lord;" then, and then only, "He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort."

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

The Collect.—We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people; that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Heb. ix. 11. *The Gospel.*—St. John viii. 46.

We enter within the shadow of the Passion.

Increased need for prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we may understand—

1. The mystery of the Passion.
2. The love which it reveals.

That love is embodied in the Person of the Sufferer.

We have followed so far; we have been refreshed by the comfort of the Divine grace; but we have *still* to follow, to take up the Cross and bear it after Jesus.

Hence "We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people."

We owned that we deserved punishment for sins committed, and we asked for mercy.

So also for our defects, our hesitations, our drawings-back, under the burden of the Cross, we ask for mercy.

But in what capacity do we ask?

As "the people of God"; those for whom Christ has

obtained "eternal redemption"; whose conscience His blood has "purged from dead works;" who "are called," and have received "the promise of eternal inheritance."

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" is the assurance of God's people.

Still, much need have they to pray that—

> "They may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul."

The Gospel contains the warning of its awful story against a vain reliance upon what God has done for men—

> "Ye are not of God."
> "Ye do dishonour Me."

The Jews were the people of God, and yet they rejected Him Who said, "I am the Son of God."

The "great goodness" is needed for our governance and preservation, lest it should be true of us also—

> "Israel doth not know; My people doth not consider."

The Epistle contains a similar warning. Neither the redemption nor the inheritance are finally or certainly secured here. We were set free "from dead works" to *serve* the living God.

The promise may be forfeited. We need to be "governed and preserved evermore"; for "if a man *keep My saying*, he shall never see death."

The Gospel gives us the first note of the Passion. The Epistle brings before us the essential element of our Master's suffering—His Sacrifice.

We see the victims which foreshadowed His coming, and we see "Christ the Victim, Christ the Priest."

We see the mystery of the Incarnation: "a greater and more perfect tabernacle." "The Word was made flesh, and 'tabernacled' among us."

"Who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." The "Holy thing," the spotless offering, born of the Blessed Virgin, is spotless because "conceived of the Holy Ghost."

We see the whole history of the Divine Sacrifice culminating in His entrance, once for all, into "the holy place," there to present "the one sacrifice for sins for ever," to plead its power for the preservation of His people, both in body and soul.

The two great needs of man's life—governance and preservation.

I. Man endeavours to be a law to himself; the end—failure and ruin.

The enemies of his soul seek to obtain dominion over him; the end—bondage and degradation.

God's governance the only liberty; the government "of great goodness."

God has committed the government to His Son; "Behold, thy King cometh."

The Cross, the standard of His Kingdom; the law of the Cross, the law of His Kingdom.

The purification of life through the Blood of the Cross necessary before acceptable service can be offered.

The Sacrament of Penance the application of that Precious Blood.

"His servants shall serve Him," *i.e.* those who have borne the Cross, and through the Cross found union with Him, shall be counted worthy of service in His eternal Kingdom.

Service the highest privilege and the highest bliss.

II. He not only governs, but preserves; *by* the Cross, *in the way* of the Cross.

The way of the Cross is the way of trial and danger; obedient to Him we follow, but we must follow in the path He trod.

His path led to betrayal, desertion, the agony, conflict with the powers of evil, the Dereliction and the Death on Calvary.

In all trial, in all temptation, in life, in death, the Cross alike our guide and our protection—

"By Thy Cross and Passion, Good Lord, deliver us."

"Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes."

We come to the Sacrifice of the Altar—the bloodless sacrifice of a new covenant.

We come to offer; we come to receive, that we may go on offering; that purged by His blood we may serve the living God.

Christ is present, both as Priest and Victim.

It is all Christ. Christ's Body, Christ's Blood; Christ's Presence, Christ's goodness; Christ Whom we offer, Christ Whom we receive; Christ Whom we worship; Christ Whom we want to follow.

Yes, Christ Whom we *want* to follow. And He, knowing our desires, stoops to unite us to Himself, that we in Him may have strength wherewith to follow.

"Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple." But now He hides Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, and abides ever in His Temple that we may hide ourselves in Him.

He seeks to hide Himself in our hearts now, that we may hereafter enter with Him into His eternal Temple.

> "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall no more go out."

He hides Himself, and calls us into the solitude of His Presence, that He may speak to our souls.

He has so much about which to speak to us: about Himself, and about ourselves; about the Cross and Passion; about our present need of penitence; about our coming Easter Communion.

> "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me; for He shall speak peace unto His people, and to His saints, that they turn not again."
>
> "He that is of God heareth God's words."

What words they are! Of mercy, goodness, love!

Who shall tell of the inward communion of the soul with Christ? He is silent, and yet He speaks, as each is capable of hearing.

> "The love of Jesus, what it is
> None but His loved ones know."

1. Pray for—
   - (i.) The spirit of sacrifice;
   - (ii.) The spirit of obedience to the supreme Will of God;
   - (iii.) Grace to hear the voice from the throne of the Cross.

2. Resolve—

   "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

The Sunday next before Easter

The Collect.—Almighty and everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Phil. ii. 5. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xxvii. 1.

Note the link between the beginning and the close of Lent.

> "Pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity."
>
> "Who of Thy tender love hast sent Thy Son to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross."

We learn love at the fount of love.

> "We love Him because He first loved us."
>
> "Love is of God."

The compassionate love of God for man, helpless in himself, surrounded by enemies, and in constant need of preservation, sends the Son to share, in our flesh, all through which we have to pass.

The Son of God, being one with the Father, willingly offers Himself for the accomplishment of man's salvation.

The Will of the Father, Who sent, in nowise derogates from the willingness of the Son Who was sent. "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God."

Week by week we have followed our Master in His earthly life, in His temptations, His conflict with evil.

In proportion as in following we have learned to know Him, and, in knowing, to love Him, so shall we have gained insight into the "Mind . . . which was in Christ Jesus," into His revelation of the Father, into the marvels of His tender love.

We draw near now to the final evidence of that love. So much is concentrated into this last week of His life on earth.

It begins with Palm Sunday and the triumphal entry; it ends with the resting in the tomb.

The road leads to places for ever sacred to the Master's followers — Bethany, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, Calvary.

We follow day by day, and hour by hour, watching, listening, seeking to learn how to live and how to die.

The words of the Collect are ever on our lips—

> "That we may follow the example of His humility and His patience."

Palm Sunday combines triumph with humility, humility with patience.

The King comes to His own, but He is "meek and riding upon an ass"; He is surrounded by the acclamations of the multitude, above which He alone can hear, "Crucify Him, crucify."

He is riding consciously to His Death.

> "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day."

The time of His humility had been the day of their opportunity; the Husbandman had waited for the precious fruit of the earth, and had long patience for it (James v. 7).

We have the same notes in the Epistle and Gospel.

(*a*) There is the touch of prospective triumph in the onlook through death to resurrection; the hope implied that we may some day join in the perfected triumph "with palms in our hands."

(*b*) There is the assertion of the co-equal glory with God of Him Whose humility is this week manifested in its supreme form.

(*c*) There is the promise of the exaltation of the Holy Name of Jesus

"Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

(*d*) There is the witness of Pilate and of the Cross, "this Just Person, Jesus the King of the Jews." There is the witness of the temple-veil, the earth, the rocks, the testimony of the centurion.

Triumph foreshadowed, and yet humility; patience, that the victory through humility may be accomplished.

The Epistle, in definite, dogmatic, concentrated sentences of sharpest contrasts, tells us *Who* it is Who suffers; the Gospel tells in vivid words *what* and *how* He suffers.

There is no stronger statement of Christ's Deity than that with which St. Paul begins his argument.

Pre-existing "in the form of God, He took upon Him

the form of a servant." The form of God was His by the essence of His nature.

From this height He stooped of His own will, which was the Father's will.

"He emptied Himself of His glory"—the glory which He had with the Father "before the world was."

He, God of God, Light of Light, "made Himself of no reputation, and was made in the likeness of man."

Down the steps of this "Sancta Scala" He moves with a Divine dignity of patience, down to the very lowest:

"He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

"Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him."

The keynote of the Collect comes back to us. He "left us an example that we should follow in His steps."

His life and death made possible our participation in His Resurrection—in the eternal Easter.

But they only can hope to partake of it who follow the example of His humility, of His patience, of His most holy life.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It was true of Him; it is true of us, because it was true of Him.

In the Blessed Sacrament we have the perpetual witness to the Humility of Christ.

He humbleth Himself—

(i.) To be our Priest and Victim.
(ii.) To vouchsafe to us His Presence.
(iii.) To invite us to union with Himself.

And we have the perpetual witness to His Patience.

(i.) He will never leave the Altars of His Church in spite of—
  (*a*) The unbelief, blasphemy, and outrages of the world;
  (*b*) The backslidings, the coldness, and hard-heartedness of communicants.

(ii.) He still pleads for us before the Father.
He still offers Himself by the hands of His earthly priesthood.
He still offers Himself to us, loving, waiting, hoping that, at last, we will "follow the example of His Patience."

Make the thoughts of the Collect the special ground of your preparation for your Palm Sunday Communion:

(i.) The tender love of God in sending His Son.
(ii.) The tender love of Christ in taking upon Him our flesh.
(iii.) And, in that flesh, suffering death upon the Cross.
(iv.) His great Humility and His Patience.
(v.) His Resurrection.
(vi.) Our following of the Divine example.
(vii.) Our participation in His Resurrection.

See how the first five thoughts (i. to v.) find their illustration in the Holy Eucharist.

See how the last two (vi. and vii.) become possible through our Communion with Him Who meets us there.

Only through following the example, and through union with Him here, can we hope to cast the palm branches of final victory before His throne.

This week, beneath the Cross, in preparation for Easter Communion:

1. Pray for—

(i.) Humility in making a good confession;
(ii.) Patience in devout performance of penance;
(iii.) Love for Jesus crucified, Who in patience waits for, and in humility stoops to seek, your good Communion.

2. Resolve—

"Whither Thou goest, I will go."

Easter Day

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who through Thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Col. iii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John xx. 1.

ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre."

The grave could not hold Him. "Death hath no more dominion over Him."

He will not tarry. The love which constrained Him to mount the Cross, constrains Him to bring glad tidings of His victory over death, of His life beyond the grave, without delay to His people.

"I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

"Very early," "in the first dawning" of that Easter morn, "the Sun of Righteousness is risen with healing in His wings."

The Magdalene is seeking the Body of her Lord; she finds St. Peter and St. John, and together Penitence, Faith, Love, stand "while it is yet dark" at the empty tomb.

It is so still in the Catholic Church. In the greatest cities, in the humblest village, penitence, faith, love, gather round the altar, the place where the Body of Jesus is laid.

We come not to an empty symbol, to an empty tomb. We come to the altar of the living Christ, of Him Who is "alive for evermore," and there shall we find Him.

We shall find Him Whom we saw surrendering His Soul to death on Good Friday.

We shall find "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us."

We shall find "Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

We shall find Him waiting for us, waiting to welcome us, waiting to comfort us, waiting to bring us into closest communion with Himself and with His resurrection power.

"Dead indeed unto sin" through our good confession and the power of the Precious Blood; henceforth, "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The power of that silent Resurrection!

The first flush of dawn comes silently and almost unobserved—but it is the day.

The first green blades of spring push silently and almost unobserved through the long-hardened ground—but the spring has come.

That bursting of the grave in the quiet stillness of the first Easter Day, unwitnessed, unattended, was "the overcoming of death," "the opening unto us of everlasting life."

"'Tis the spring of souls to-day;
Christ hath burst His prison."

This is the thought of Easter—the *power* of Christ's Resurrection.

That power was witnessed to by, and in, the Church which sprang from the grave of Jesus; was witnessed to, not only by, but in the lives of, His disciples; must be witnessed to by, and in, the lives of all members of the Holy Catholic Church to the end of time:

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

Henceforth we are to strive for the heavenly mind, for "your life is hid with Christ in God."

But the battle is not lessened; the conflict with the powers of evil within and without must be maintained. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth."

True, we walked sometimes as "the children of disobedience," but the darkness is past; fear has been taken away.

The "continual help" of the Risen Lord is ours; and in humble faith in the power of His Resurrection life we bring to Him our "good desires" and lay them at His feet on Easter Day.

"The smoking flax shall He not quench."

The Gospel tells us of the certainty of the fact of the Resurrection.

The story is told in language which in itself convinces from the dignity of its simple naturalness. Penitence brings hope to faith and love. "Love outruns faith, yet needs for its complete assurance what faith alone can give."

St. Peter not only stoops and looks, but goes into the sepulchre; there he finds the evidence of the calm, inherent power of Him Who said of His life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

"His glory had awaked right early." He had come forth "as a bridegroom out of His chamber, and as a giant to run His course."

We, seeing through their eyes to whom "He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs," we also see and believe that "Christ is risen from the dead."

Easter is indeed "The Day of Days."

(i.) It is a day of triumph, for "death is swallowed up in victory," and the Lord "hath triumphed gloriously."

(ii.) It is a day of sacred joy, "for He hath done marvellous things."

(iii.) It is a day of blissful meetings. "Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them."

In Christ's Resurrection we are assured of our own resurrection, and the resurrection of those we love who have passed before us into the world unseen.

In the Holy Eucharist we meet Him, and in meeting Him we meet in blest communion those who, through His Cross and Passion, are at rest in Him.

(iv.) It is a day of peace. "He saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

A deep peace reigns, the peace of the loved in the presence of the Beloved.

It is the peace of assured power, the very "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

We have no words to utter. We can only cling to His

pierced Feet, look upward to His riven Side, gaze upon His Sacred Face, and resolve, God helping us, to keep His Presence ever within our souls.

Enough for us to hear Him speak "All hail!" To each He has the greeting suited to the individual need, known in its fulness to Him alone. "Woman, why weepest thou?"

Can any joy on earth compare with the joy of a good Easter Communion?

He has dealt so tenderly with us all Lent; He has led us so gently out of darkness into light. All Lent has been one long pleading of His Holy Spirit with us, because he wished us to have the joy of union in our Easter Communion.

Christ has not only borne with us in our yieldings, and sought us in our wanderings; He has shared our temptations and our conflicts, followed us even when we tried to forget Him.

He found us, and He won the victory of love over our doubts and fears. Before the Cross we poured out our tale of sin, and with His Precious Blood He cleansed us.

It is *this* Jesus, *this* Saviour, Who welcomes us, and Whom we welcome, on Easter Day.

> "I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go."
>
> "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Before Easter Communion—

1. Pray for grace

   (*a*) To welcome your risen Lord with a perfected penitence.

(*b*) To worship Him with an undoubting faith.
(*c*) To receive Him in a spirit of humble, purified, adoring love.

2. Resolve—

"I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

First Sunday after Easter

The Collect.—Almighty Father, Who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification; Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may alway serve Thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. John v. 4. *The Gospel.*—St. John xx. 19.

The Octave of Easter. Thoughts of Easter triumph, Easter joy, are still in our hearts. Our comprehension of the full issues of the Resurrection of our Lord deepens and widens as the days pass by.

On Easter Day the great *fact* of the Resurrection and the transition from gloom to light, from thoughts of death to the assurance of the Risen Life, almost dazzled us.

"Christ is risen." He is risen indeed. Our thoughts were of Him, and of Him only. "He was lost, and is found." The Apostles when they saw Him "believed not for joy, and wondered."

Now we think how the fact of His Resurrection affects *us*. "He hath triumphed gloriously," and the fruits of His triumph are extended to us through "the power of an endless life."

There is one word which attracts and rivets our attention

to-day; so brief and yet so pregnant with meaning. It is the Saviour's greeting to His disciples, "Peace"—"Peace be unto you."

It was the answer of Divine knowledge to the unuttered cry of their hearts. The experience of the past, their sense of loss and their imperfect faith had made them fear. "The doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews."

True, they knew He had risen again; they had the testimony of those who had visited the sepulchre, of those who had seen Him after His Resurrection.

And yet even with this knowledge, their hearts failed them as they thought of their position in the present, and looked forward to the future.

To them came the greeting of "Peace," conveying to them the assurance of their Master's Presence among them, a Presence unchanged by His sojourn in the grave, a Presence with the changeless attributes of power and love. It was "this same Jesus."

The message comes to us with the same beauty and the same force. A message old, but ever new. Human hearts are the same, and the world in its attitude to Christ and His Church is the same.

Our position, in some respects, very closely resembles that of the Apostles.

We have received at Easter the assurance of our Master's Risen Life. We *know* that He is among us; we know what His power and love have done for us in the past.

We know that he *has* set us free from the bonds of the sins which we by our frailty had committed. We know that He has proved Himself "mighty to save."

And yet—we fear. We are conscious that we have not left the malignity of sin, nor our faculty of sinning, behind

us. The past week has been sufficient to teach us *that*. The flesh is still weak, the enemy is still strong.

We look onward to the struggles still to come. Can it be that I shall endure to the end? Is it possible that I shall be able to live the life of constant resistance to the constant temptations with which I shall be assailed? It is all very well now with Easter and the Master's Presence, but—I fear, I shrink from the contest.

He stands amongst us as of old, and still He speaks in the closed chambers of our hearts, as we shut out the world and seek to meditate upon the wonders revealed to us. "Peace be unto you."

True, sin terrifies; sin in the past, and the possibilities of sin in the future. But, "He shewed unto them His Hands and His Side," the signs of the victory which, through death, He had won.

> "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

Whether, therefore, we look backwards or forwards there is "Peace."

> "In that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."
>
> "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."
>
> "Because I live, ye shall live also."

The Collect follows the same line of thought.

> "Almighty Father, Who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins."

There is assurance for the past.

> "And to rise again for our justification."

There is assurance for the future.

It is not merely deliverance from the past which Christ has won for us, but such fellowship in His Risen Life as shall make us sharers in His victory.

The petition of the Collect also looks both backward and forward. We pray that we may "put away the leaven of malice and wickedness"—"the old leaven" of the Easter Anthems, with which we could not "keep the Feast." *That* has to do with the past.

"That we may alway serve Thee in pureness of living and truth." That corresponds to the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" wherewith those should keep the Feast who are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." *That* has to do with the future.

The Almighty Father's care for His children is for all time and in all circumstances. His power manifested in the past can be trusted in the future.

Sin has been the origin of our separation from God, and of all that has resulted from that separation. Sin will still continue to pursue us.

But Christ has made provision not merely for the deliverance already attained, but for remission in the future.

> "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them."

It is the power of absolution which Christ entrusts to the Church of the living God.

The whole teaching of the Epistle is sacramental, and is the beloved Disciple's exposition of His Master's charge.

> "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."
>
> "Give Thy Holy Spirit to this infant that he may be born again" (*Service for Holy Baptism*).

It is through the grace given to those regenerated in Holy Baptism that we are enabled to overcome the world.

"The water and the blood" are referred to in the Benediction of the water in the Sacrament of Baptism—that sacrament in which St. Paul says "we are buried with Him."

In the Baptism of water and the Spirit the Blood of Christ is applied to us for the remission of sins, in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We pass through the Red Sea of His Blood, and are delivered from our enemies thereby.

And not only so; Christ is made a new principle and fount of life to all who are so re-born in Him:

> "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son."
>
> "We are begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Through union with His Resurrection Life alone can we hope to serve Him "in pureness of living and truth."

> "He that hath not the Son, hath not life."

Our Lord's work during the Forty Days of His Risen Life on earth was a figure of that work of justification which He is ever carrying on, bringing home to individual souls the peace and grace which He won for all by His Passion.

He brought to St. Peter forgiveness; to St. Mary Magdalene comfort; to St. Thomas the assurance of the truth.

By His commission to His Apostles He instituted means

for the communication of His grace to the penitents of all time who should "believe through their word."

His victory over sin is to be perpetuated through the grace of Absolution. Union with His Life is to be perpetuated through reception of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

In that Sacrament we find His Presence, and in that Presence we find *all* that our souls can need; "more than either we desire or deserve."

Place your wants before you. What is it that you need?

Is it peace your soul longs for? "It is I; be not afraid."

Is it assurance of forgiveness? Behold His Hands and His Side. You cannot doubt the power of His Victory, the virtue of the Precious Blood.

Is it hope for the future? "This life is in His Son." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "I have the keys of hell and of death."

We cannot doubt, as with eyes enlightened by that Holy Spirit Who "bears witness" and is "the Truth," we kneel in His Sacred Presence and receive the Bread of Life. We say with St. Thomas, "my Lord and my God."

To Him we commend our past, our present, and our future:

> "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
>
> "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."
>
> "My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

In *Preparation*—

> "Pray for that faith which overcometh the world, whereby thou mayest abide always with Jesus thy Saviour."

In *Communion*—

"Behold Jesus thy Lord, showing to thee His Glorious Wounds, the proofs of His Victory, and bidding thee hide thyself therein, that thou mayest find grace and peace."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Go forth to endure all things for the love of thy Lord, rejoicing if thou art called on to bear witness to the power of His Risen Life."[1]

[1] "A Year of Eucharists."

Second Sunday after Easter

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy Life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. Peter ii. 19. *The Gospel.*—St. John x. 11.

The Collect for to-day seems to follow upon and to deepen the teaching of last week.

Then we prayed, "Almighty Father, Who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins." To-day we say, "Almighty God, Who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us a sacrifice for sin."

Then we called to mind that He rose "again for our justification." To-day we say, "and also to be an ensample of godly life."

The past and the future are brought before us in both cases. Having been made free from the power of sin, we want to lead the risen life, and God, in His mercy, has not left us in uncertainty as to what that life is. He has given us the "ensample of godly life."

"Give us grace that we may always most thankfully

receive that His inestimable benefit;" the Sacrifice whereby the power of evil has been broken.

"And also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy Life;" serving God "in pureness of living and truth."

The "blessed steps" are the only path of safety. They lead us, indeed, through the thorns of temptation, through the fire of suffering, but they lead to everlasting life.

The final promise to the redeemed is, "They shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

The sacrifice and the ensample are so strangely blended. In the Sacrifice of the Lamb we find the ensample: in following the ensample we attain to sacrifice.

The Gospel gives a name, sometimes used, to the Sunday, "Good Shepherd Sunday." It is the picture of Himself drawn by our Master's own Hand, dear to the Church from the earliest ages, and to the end of time.

"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His Life for the sheep;" "To die for our sins;" "A sacrifice for sin"; "Who His own Self bare our sins in His own Body on the Tree."

It is the same thought all through. He gave Himself a sacrifice; He bare our sins on Calvary; He suffered death itself. Why? Because He was the Good Shepherd, and therefore laid down His Life for the sheep.

"Ye were as sheep going astray," says St. Peter in the Epistle, "but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

St. Peter had himself experienced the care of the Good Shepherd when he himself had gone astray, and in writing to those who through his teaching had become members of

the Holy Church, he uses the expression learnt from his Master's lips, "the Shepherd of your souls."

The whole Gospel is contained in the word. The love of Christ in coming "to seek and to save that which was lost:" the sacrifice involved in the seeking; the example of the Good Shepherd's Life.

Is it any wonder that the figure of the "Bonus Pastor" has been dear to the Church from the earliest ages, from the Catacombs till the present day?

But note the purpose of the Good Shepherd, of His Life and of His Sacrifice. They are so closely connected with all our Easter thoughts.

It is the same this Sunday as it was last; there is still the remembrance of our sins. But there is the assurance of the value of the sacrifice offered, and of the perpetual care of the Saviour in the perfecting of His intention concerning us.

It was God's "only Son" Who was made the Sacrifice; *that* is the "inestimable benefit."

He, the Very Son of God, it was, "Who His own Self bare our sins in His own Body on the Tree." It is "by *His* stripes we are healed." *He* "lay down His Life for the sheep."

The more we dwell upon the value of the Sacrifice as manifested in the Person of the Victim, the more assured do we become of the consequent efficacy of that pardon which He has obtained for and bestowed upon us.

What must our sins be to demand such a sacrifice? What must Love be to provide such a Victim? How marvellous in cleansing, healing power must be the Stripes of that Sinless Sufferer!

But the purpose of the Good Shepherd is to be found in our redeemed life. He rose "for our justification," that we might serve God "in pureness of living and truth." He left us "an example that we should follow in His steps."

Pardoned, we have to live *in* Him and *for* Him. Redeemed from the power of sin, we have to live as sons of God, ever following "the blessed steps of His most holy Life," in the power of Divine grace.

Henceforth, being no longer the slaves of sin, but followers of the Good Shepherd, we entrust our whole lives to Him, "the Bishop" (the Overseer) of our souls.

In the way of the Cross we may have "for conscience toward God to endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

We may have to suffer, through injustice, even for our well-doing. We shall certainly have to undergo penance, in one form or another, for the faults we have committed.

Shall we say, therefore, that God has forgotten us, or that sin has, after all, not been forgiven?

The Good Shepherd is the Bishop of our souls. "The Good Shepherd giveth His Life for the sheep. I know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

His Life has purchased the redemption of His sheep, and nothing can happen to those whom He knows, apart from His sovereign Will.

The penances are to purify the life; the crosses and the trials are but to work out in us a likeness to Himself, to be for us opportunities of "endeavouring ourselves" to follow in His blessed steps.

"The hireling seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth." The opposite is true of the Good Shepherd. Caring for, knowing, watching over His sheep, He seeth the wolf coming, draws nearer to the tempted in

the hour of danger, places Himself between them and the enemy of their souls:

> "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His Arm, and carry them in His Bosom."

The Psalms are full of the same thought. "The Lord is my Shepherd" (Ps. xxiii. 1). "Hear, O Thou Shepherd of Israel."

Christ appropriated to Himself this, to us, His dearest Title. St. Peter uses it in to-day's Epistle, and later his anticipation of his Master's Second Coming finds expression in the words, "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear."

We have the fulfilment in the Blessed Sacrament.

> "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

We make the acknowledgment of our wanderings and of our wish to return each time we draw near to the sacred Presence of the Good Shepherd.

We have wandered, but His care has never left us. Through His grace seeking us we have come back once again to Him Whose love never changes, Who never fails and never forgets.

It seems impossible that we should ever be unmindful of His Sacrifice, or of the reason of that Sacrifice. The Altar is the perpetual witness that the Good Shepherd laid down His Life for the sheep.

In the Eucharist we plead His "full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

Faith draws near and beholds the Good Shepherd giving His Life for the sheep.

In the Eucharist we behold the Divine example; all the beauties of His All-perfect Life are there. There are submission to the Father's Will, the surrender of self, love for His brethren perfected. There are humility, long-suffering, patience, meekness.

He knows the life of each who draws near to Him, their shortcomings and their failures. He has for each the grace which He sees they need. "Therefore can I lack nothing."

"The sheep hear His Voice." The world-voices must be hushed, the soul must be cleansed, the self must be silent, if we would hear the Voice of the Good Shepherd in our Communions.

He speaks, and who shall tell of the utterances of His love to the faithful, humble, waiting soul which He has fed with the Heavenly Food? "Lovest thou Me? Follow me."

In *Preparation* say—

Ps. xxiii.

In *Communion*—

"My sheep hear My Voice: and I give unto them eternal life."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Hand."

Third Sunday after Easter

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who shewest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. Peter ii. 11. *The Gospel.*—St. John xvi. 16.

The connection between the Collect and Epistle is at once apparent: the "things contrary to" the Christian profession and the things "agreeable to the same" being plainly those concerning which St. Peter writes to the members of the Holy Church.

The connection of the Gospel is not so apparent. The Gospels for this and the two following Sundays are all taken from St. John, chapter xvi., and form a portion of our Lord's last words to His disciples before the Passion.

In love He is preparing them for the future; not merely the future of His coming death, but of His subsequent return to His Father—

> "A little while and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while and ye shall see Me; because I go to the Father."

No wonder that the minds of the disciples were troubled. Their Master was their All, and to be separated from Him, even for "a little while," filled their hearts with dread.

We are inclined to think how dull must have been their comprehension after all the teaching of the Son of God Himself, not to understand His meaning.

Note the long-suffering and the tenderness of Christ's dealings with his followers.

"Ye shall be sorrowful"—He prepares them for sorrow and strengthens them to meet it—"but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

And he tells them the cause of their joy—"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

When their eyes have been opened and their faith established in the truth of His Resurrection Life, then their hearts would rejoice.

Their joy no man could then take from them, for their faith will have been established in a Life which has triumphed over the world and the power of the grave.

"This same Jesus," Whom they had seen die on Calvary, "had shewed Himself alive after His Passion, by many infallible proofs."

"This same Jesus," they were to be taught by the voices of angels, "shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And then, in fulfilment of their Master's words, "your heart shall rejoice," we read, "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Their joy was founded on their faith. They had been enlightened by the Holy Ghost; they could worship His Divine Being, and so, even when He had left them to go

to the Father, their hearts could rejoice, and *that* joy no man could take from them.

And so it is that on the three last Sundays after Easter the Church seems leading us gradually onward to the thought of the coming Ascension of our Lord, preparing us, as He prepared His disciples, for that consummation of His triumph.

The disciples were plainly in error: they had not grasped the truth of their Master's teaching; they needed the light of the Holy Spirit to illumine their intelligence.

So in the Collect we pray—

> "Almighty God, who shewest to them that be *in error the light of Thy truth*, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness."

There is but one "way of righteousness"; it is marked by "the blessed steps" of "the Lord our Righteousness."

We are in error when we wander from that way. We need the light of the Holy Spirit to show us our wandering, and where to plant our feet.

"Pureness of living and *truth*," we said on the first Sunday after Easter: "the light of Thy *truth*," we say to-day.

A right faith in God's revealed truth is the foundation of a life of following the blessed steps of the pure and holy Jesus.

There must be faith in the truth of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, before we can say, "the love of Christ constraineth us" to take Him as the guiding principle of our lives.

"Grant with all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion," *i.e.* the Church, the household of God.

"Admitted," *i.e.* by Holy Baptism in accordance with the command of Christ the Head of the Church. Faith in Him involves obedience to His commands.

> "That they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same."

Being "dead indeed unto sin," we are pledged to utterly give up the things which we know to be likely to lead us to sin.

They are contrary to our profession, "which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him."

Being "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," our profession is "that as He died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized die from sin and rise again unto righteousness, . . . daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

That is the profession, that is the life of the members of the Risen Christ to which we are called.

St. Peter is writing in the Epistle to those who had been "admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion," and he tells them what to avoid, and what to seek to attain, that God may be glorified in them.

He speaks of them as "strangers and pilgrims," a phrase full of beauty and of teaching.

Earth is not their home; the true home of God's sons is with their Father in heaven. They are here but for a time, and, as citizens of a better land, are not to allow themselves to be entangled in and contaminated by their association with the world.

They are pilgrims, seeking the better land which is their

home; animated by motives of which the children of earth are ignorant; ever advancing upward and onward; bearing the Cross as the token of their profession, and following the steps of the pilgrims' Lord.

In their pilgrimage they are exposed to danger and assaults. The world, the flesh, and the devil lie in wait to hinder and destroy.

"I beseech you abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." The dangers of the Christian pilgrim are spiritual. The powers of evil are leagued against him.

His life, his "conversation," is to be the visible and convincing sign of his allegiance—his fellowship is to be in heaven as he walks on earth in "the way of righteousness."

> "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

In the world, yet not of the world, the pilgrims of Christ are to fulfil their duties as citizens from a sense of responsibility towards God. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake.*"

The Will of God is to be their rule and their supreme law. They have been made free from the bondage of sin and death; but are to use their liberty aright, not "for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the *servants of God.*"

To be the servant of God now is the pilgrim's dignity. Hereafter, when the pilgrimage is over, the reward shall be, "His servants shall serve Him."

"Strangers and pilgrims," weary oft-times by reason of the difficulties and trials of the journey, finding no rest in the world through which we pass, we come to the sacred Presence of our Master.

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He shows to the wanderer the light of His truth, and reveals to Him the way of righteousness.

He imparts, through union with Himself, new powers of life wherewith to persevere in the path of duty, wherewith to press onward towards the Father's home.

"It is good for us to be here," we say with St. Peter on the Mount. True, but the life has to be lived, the duties done, the battle fought. This is not your home.

"Ye now therefore have sorrow"—the trials of your pilgrimage, the broken prayers, the occasional opportunities of approach to His Presence.

"But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." In each Communion He *does* "see us again," and our heart should be filled with the joy of union Peace, strength, safety are ours then; faith is increased, hope strengthened, love deepened as we kneel in His Presence.

But each Communion is only the preparation for the eternal joy of His Presence. Then shall we see Him and know Him as He is.

> "In Thy Presence is the fulness of joy: and at Thy Right Hand there is pleasure for evermore."

(i.) Offer your penitence for all words and deeds contrary to your profession as the pilgrim of Christ.

(ii.) Pray for grace to bear the banner of the Cross bravely in your contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil, the enemies "which war against the soul."

(iii.) Pray for increased purity of soul and for joy, the consequence of spiritual illumination, in your Communions.

So shall you be preparing for the fulfilment of your Master's promise—

"I will see you again, and your joy shall be full."

"A little while," is the aspiration of the humble, faithful, loving follower of Jesus.

"My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God."

Fourth Sunday after Easter

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—St. James i. 17. *The Gospel.*—St. John xvi. 5.

"Strangers and pilgrims" was the description given in last Sunday's Epistle of those "admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion."

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," were the concluding words of the Holy Gospel.

"That among the sundry and manifold changes of the world," through which as strangers and pilgrims we pass, "our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found." Such is one of the petitions in the Collect for to-day.

Instability is what, alas, we all have to confess, and which is so often the bane of our spiritual life.

"Ye did run well." Yes, for a time; just when the penitence of Holy Week, our Confession, our Easter Communion were fresh in our memories, then for a time we

seemed following the Blessed Steps with a certain fixity of purpose.

But we so soon flag: our eyes are attracted by the sights of the world which surround us; we seek pleasure in the things of time; we lose sight of the Divine Presence.

We change so quickly, and we are disappointed with ourselves as we become conscious of the change.

Circumstances change, people change towards us, and we change in our attitude and relation to them. There is no rest, no certainty, no stability.

> "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

How marvellous are the words! What a calm, still sense of peace and rest they bring with them! We pass from the rush and turmoil and changefulness of the world into the everlasting stillness of the Presence of God Himself.

"No variableness, neither shadow of turning!" Think of the sense of rest under the shadow of the unchanging power of our Father which the words convey.

And from Him, the Unchanged and the Unchanging Father, come "every good gift and every perfect gift." All that He gives is good, and all is perfect because it comes from Him.

From these thoughts spring the opening words of the Collect—

> "O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men."

Mark the contrast between the sons of God, weakened by sin, and their Father.

His Will changes not. "This is the Will of God even

your sanctification"; "of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth."

His love for His children changes not. It seems impossible to be true. We try His love so severely; we sin, we forget, we wander, and we neglect. But still He loves.

And we;—our wills are never constant. We *say* they are strong, and we find them weak. We put the reins of our wills into other hands, "fulfilling the desires (the wills, *margin*) of the flesh and of the mind."

Our affections are indeed "unruly," because unruled. We exercise so little restraint upon them; we are fickle, emotional, even in our service of God. We welcome the Risen Lord at Easter; we are cold and unloving before a month has passed.

And this instability of will and affection, this unruliness, is the consequence of sin. Man lost his power of self-control through the Fall, and the poison of sin lingers in and pollutes his nature.

> "O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of *sinful* men."

Note the reliance upon the *power* of God which the words express. God can "order" even our wills and affections, concerning the rule of which we so often despair.

That God is willing to order them we know, for the power of ruling them is one of the good and perfect gifts which come down from Him, the Fount of love and peace.

Relying then upon the powers and willingness of the Unchanging Father, we say, "Grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise."

We are amazed by the seeming impossibility of the prayer which the Church bids us use.

"*Do* the thing which Thou commandest," is what we should have said; and even that, when the command proved hard and involved the contradiction of our will, would have required both grace and effort.

But to "*love* the thing which Thou commandest." It seems beyond our power, beyond our grasp altogether.

And yet, "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me." "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? Father, glorify Thy Name."

"Every good gift cometh down from the Father of Lights," even the grace wherewith to manifest the spirit of the Crucified Master and to accomplish the impossible.

If through the power of God's grace we are enabled to love the thing which He commands, and to desire that which He promises, then our hearts will "surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found," in spite of the changefulness of this present world.

The Epistle tells us more of the love of the Unchanging "Father of Lights," in His original adoption of us into His household through the Incarnation of His Son:

> "Of His own Will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

God waited not that man should seek admission—"Of His Will begat He us."

And as a consequence of our position as sons of God we are to "eschew those things that are contrary to our profession."

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

How Sunday after Sunday the Epistle provides us with subject-matter for self-examination. Our "unruly wills and affections" so often lead us to be slow to hear, quick in speech, unrestrained in temper.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." This is "the thing which" Christ "commanded."

"Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls."

Twice in these few verses St. James uses the expression "the Word."

"The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us," full of grace and truth."

Through union with Him we receive of the fulness of His grace, and are thereby enabled to love the thing which God commands, and are strengthened in stability to the saving of our souls.

The Gospel leads us on to thoughts of the approaching Ascension, and of the "perfect gift" from above which the Ascended Lord was to shed forth upon His Church.

The eyes of His disciples have to be enlightened that they may see the need of their present trial. "It is expedient for you that I go away."

How impossible it must have appeared to them! They had to learn to "love the thing" which God commanded.

The marvels of the "perfect gift" are explained to them—

(i.) He is the Comforter—the Paraclete.

(ii.) He is to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

(iii.) He is to guide them into all truth.
(iv.) He will show them things to come.
(v.) "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Think what the promise of such a gift meant to them in the prospect of His departure. An ever-present gift of guidance, illumination: the Presence of One Who would take of the things of Christ Himself and show them with a fulness of light to His followers.

Note, too, the tenderness of the Saviour's words. He knows that sorrow has filled their hearts, and He comforts them with the promise of an abiding Comforter.

"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Gradually, as they are able to bear it, the Spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth.

And what He will reveal to them, the gifts that He will give them are, after all, the gifts of their Master Himself.

True, every good gift cometh down from the Father, but "all that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you."

How gently Christ leads His Apostles to "desire that which Thou dost promise."

And so we come to the Altar to receive the "perfect gift," even the Body and Blood of God's dear Son.

There is "no variableness nor shadow of turning." Year by year, week by week, day by day, wherever there is an altar and a priest, we find the same Presence, the same tender Love, the same precious gifts.

Among all the changes of this changing world the Love of Jesus in the Eucharist abides unchanged. His Love is

fixed upon us. "Father," He says, "I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

There, in union with Him, "true joys are to be found." There we hear His Voice promising us that which our souls most need.

> "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."
>
> "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

We own, and we fear our own instability. In the Presence of our Master's unchanged love, in Communion with Him, in the assurance of the indwelling presence of the Comforter, we find courage, hope, and stability.

Cherish the abiding Presence of God the Holy Spirit within your soul:

(i.) That you may obtain strength of will and purity of affection.

(ii.) That, by His leading, you may grow in realisation of the constancy and tenderness of the love of Christ for you.

(iii.) That, through His illuminating and purifying power, you may become capable of receiving more and more of the fulness of the gifts of Christ your Lord.

Fifth Sunday after Easter

The Collect.—O Lord, from Whom all good things do come; Grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Epistle.—St. James i. 22. *The Gospel.*—St. John xvi. 23.

"Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," we read in last Sunday's Epistle.

"O Lord, from Whom all good things do come," is the continuation in the Collect for to-day.

Last Sunday our Master told us of the gift of the Holy Spirit which He would, after His Ascension, pour out upon His Church. Therefore to-day we pray:

> "Grant to us Thy humble servants, that *by Thy holy inspiration* we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guidance may perform the same."

The power of thought is full of mystery, and almost boundless in the extent of its influence. It is the very fountain of our life, from which flows the evil or the good which are our outward characteristics.

If the source be pure, the life will be pure; if the source be contaminated, the life will be evil.

Every deed is a thought in action—"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," and then follows the category of evil actions.

> "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the sources of life" (Prov. iv. 23).

And to this citadel of man's life God, the Holy Spirit, has access. It is through His influential movement *there* that He "orders the unruly wills and affections."

He, "the Spirit of truth," Whose mission it is to guide us into truth and to show unto us the things of Christ, is ever breathing upon our faculty of thought, hoping that we may welcome His visitations and "think those things that be good."

Contemplate yourself as thus the object of the perpetual thought and the perpetual work of God the Holy Ghost.

With Him, as One with the Father and the Son, there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His love, His work, neither changes nor grows weary.

Contrast with this the individual, unceasing interest of God the Holy Ghost in us, our neglect, our abuse of the power of thought.

It is God-given: given us to be used for His honour and glory; given us to find its full satisfaction only in Him the Giver.

And we use this gift of God—for what? For self—how much of our time is spent in thought of self? For the world—how much of our time is spent on the things of earth? For sin—how many of our secret thoughts should we like even our neighbours to know?

But how often do we exercise the faculty of thought on God the Giver? How much do we train our thought-power

in meditation upon the things of God, in prayer, praise, thanksgiving?

> "Make me a clean heart, O God: and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."
>
> "Grant that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good."

There must be the "clean heart," or God the Holy Ghost will be unable to find a dwelling-place and to speak to us of the things which belong unto our peace. If the heart be not clean, we "grieve" the Holy Ghost.

But the Collect goes further: we are not merely to *think*, but to *do*, those things that be good.

By ourselves it is impossible; but we are taught to pray that by the merciful guiding of God, through the power of the Holy Ghost, we may perform the good deeds which are the result of the good thoughts which He has inspired.

What visions are continually opening out before us of the love, the care, the goodness of God, the Eternal Trinity, in His desire for the salvation of our souls.

The Epistle deals with practical religion. We are to be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

The exhortation is founded on the Apostle's knowledge of the work of God the Holy Ghost.

Emotional religion, and hearing without doing, are but self-deceit. The practice of religion in ordinary things is the test of its reality:

> "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

And then follows the Apostle's definition of "pure religion." Devotion to the Master, Who has redeemed us by His Blood, shows itself in devotion to His brethren:

> "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."
>
> "In all their affliction He was afflicted."
>
> "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

"And to keep himself unspotted from the world." How exacting is the religion of Jesus Christ! It demands of us impossibilities, for who can live in the world and yet "keep himself unspotted from the world"?

True, it *is* impossible if we forget that we are the children of our Father.

God sent His Son into the world to achieve impossibilities. He sends us into the world; but He sends us as members of that Son, inspired by the Holy Spirit, equipped with "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

> "With God all things are possible."
>
> "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

It is the thought of the Fatherhood of God which permeates all our Lord's last discourses with His Apostles.

The Passion is at hand, but the Face of His Father shines through the gloom of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and looking onward to His return to that Father, His Name is ever on His lips.

> "In My Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you."

Seven times in the Gospel for this Sunday does the word occur.

"I came forth from the Father and am come unto the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

The Comforter Whom He will send unto them from the Father, shall by His "holy inspiration" help "their infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

He gives them the great charter of prayer:

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

He shows His Apostles "plainly of the Father." "The Father Himself loveth you."

We need to hold the truth of our Father's love. Popular theology distorts and perverts truth. The Love of God is the unchanging, perfect love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The minds of the Apostles are exalted by the revelation: their emotions are roused. There is need of the warning, "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

"Do ye now believe?" And then their Master foretells coming desertion, "Ye shall leave Me alone."

But even with the knowledge of His brethren's desertion, He is upheld by the one thought—"My Father is with Me."

Note the absolute forgetfulness of self, even in immediate anticipation of His Passion.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace."

"In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Hence the possibility that they should keep themselves "unspotted from the world."

God, the Holy Ghost, by His holy inspiration, draws us to the Altar to the beloved Presence of our Lord.

Love is there and holiness is there, for Jesus is there. As we prepare to approach the place where His honour dwells, the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin.

"Lord, I am not worthy," must be the utterance of our hearts as we think of our sins against love, against holiness, against our Master.

We test our religion—there is so much profession, so little reality.

We have bridled our tongues—when? Only when we feared our opinions, if expressed, would be unpopular: *then* we have left Him alone; we have spoken no word in His defence.

Deeds of charity; have they been done at all? Money has been freely spent on self; but for God and His poor, what?

"Unspotted from the world;" rather, "the garment spotted by the flesh." We grow proud even of the stains which we have accumulated. "I do not set up to be better than my neighbours."

And the Holy Spirit in mercy brings to our remembrance the words, the promises of Christ our Lord. He pleads with us to seek pardon through the Precious Blood.

The Love of Christ constraineth us to draw near, and we dare not till we have found shelter in His Sacred Wounds.

We draw near to the Holy Sacrifice. "My Father Himself loveth you." The Father provides the Sacred Victim: the true Isaac offers Himself willingly; the fire of the Holy Spirit consumes the Sacrifice.

From the Altar we hear the gracious words of invitation and encouragement, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you."

We offer our intentions, we present our feeble, broken prayers. He takes them into His own pierced Hands and presents them before the Eternal Father.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift" is vouchsafed to us there by Him "from Whom all good things do come."

We offer bread and wine: He gives us His Body and His Blood. We offer our faithless, loveless petitions; "He openeth His Hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness."

We offer the feebleness of our thanksgiving; He gives to us the grace of perseverance.

He takes our weakness, and through union with Himself "endueth it with much strength."

Relying upon the promise of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, offer your prayers:

(i.) That you may know the love of God the Father.

(ii.) That you may "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having your heart sprinkled from an evil conscience."

(iii.) That you may "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering."

Ascension Day and Sunday After

The Collect for Ascension Day.—Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

For Sunday after Ascension Day.—O God the King of Glory, Who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy Kingdom in Heaven: We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. Peter iv. 7.—*The Gospel.*—St. John xv. 26.

> "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father."

That one verse covers the whole of the Incarnate Life here on earth; it contains the whole sequence of the mysteries through which the Church has led us since Advent.

The Son of God, "came forth from the Father," "in

great humility," "born of a pure Virgin," as we saw at Christmas.

He had "come into the world," and we traced His progressive manifestations.

He had "come into the world," and we witnessed His meeting with the world's temptations, the world's sins, the world's sorrows.

We saw Him in the last dread conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

> "I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

And that work finished, we saw Him commend His Soul into His Father's Hands, "that through the grave, and gate of death," He might "pass to His joyful Resurrection."

Now, His mission being accomplished, He gives the final proof of His triumph, and of the truth of His claims upon the faith of His Apostles. In their presence He "was taken up," "received up into Heaven."

> "Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."

"*From* the Father," "*to* the Father." Such is the description of His own Life in the world, given by the Son of God Himself.

As "members of Christ, children of God," such is the true picture of our human lives. But how seldom we realise our heavenly origin, the dignity of our being, the Fatherhood of God.

For forty days Christ had tarried with His Apostles—

(*a*) Strengthening their faith in Himself and in His Resurrection, "by many infallible proofs."

(*b*) "Speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

(*c*) Preparing them for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and for their subsequent life of witness.

"Having loved His own, He loved them to the end."

By His own inherent power He ascended, even as previously He had said of His Life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

And yet the expressions are used, "He was received up," "He was taken up," "O God the King of Glory, Who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy Kingdom in Heaven."

It is but the revelation of the truth which He Himself had expressed, "I and My Father are One."

We dwell upon the words "received up," for we think of the joy of Heaven, and the triumph-songs of the angelic hosts, as they receive again into the Father's Kingdom the Victorious King with the tokens of His Victory in Hands and Feet and Side:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of Glory shall come in."

We dwell, too, upon the thought of His Exaltation to the Right Hand of God:

"Equal to the Father, 'as touching His Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood."

"He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father, God Almighty."

It is "this same Jesus," Jesus of Bethlehem, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of the Temptation, Jesus of the Passion,

Jesus of the Resurrection and the great Forty Days, Who now sitteth at the Right Hand of God:

> "This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven."

Think what the two revelations meant to the Apostles and to us.

Jesus, Whom they had known, and Whom they had loved, was exalted to God's Right Hand, and could say, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth."

He shall come again with power and great glory to receive His people unto Himself in the Kingdom of His Father.

As Christ was, so He is, and so He will be until the end of time.

"He ever liveth to make intercession for us." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Truly "the Lord is mindful of His own."

Therefore relying upon His own word of promise, we say to-day, "We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us Thine Holy Ghost."

He has promised the "good and perfect gift," the gift so marvellous, that it was expedient for His Apostles that He should leave them that they might receive it.

We enter into the wonders of the gift as we conclude our petition, "to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before."

The Spirit of God is to be the source of our comfort in this, the time of our pilgrimage; our strength in duty and in witness.

Through His inspiration "we may in heart and mind

thither ascend" with Him now, and "with Him" even now, "continually dwell."

Through His power we may hope hereafter to be exalted "unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before."

The Epistle looks onward to the Master's return, and tells of the life of duty consequent upon the reception of the gift of God the Holy Ghost.

> "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves."

"A new commandment I give unto you," their Lord had said, "that ye love one another."

He sends to them the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love, to enable them to fulfil His commandment.

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." He who speaks, is to speak as the "oracles of God": he who ministers, "as of the ability which God giveth."

All comes from the gift of God, and all is to be rendered back to Him, that "God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Consider the purpose of the gifts of grace which through the Holy Spirit's power we have received—God to be glorified in us through Jesus Christ.

Of Himself Christ could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." To us, His members, He says, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

The Gospel admits us, as it were, into the mysteries of

the Eternal Godhead, the Ever Blessed Trinity, and tells us of the work and office of the Holy Spirit the Comforter:

> "When the Comforter is come Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father."

"*I* will send *from the Father;*" "the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father." How marvellously the words teach us the Unity of the three Persons in the Godhead.

He is "the Spirit of Truth," and is to lead the Apostles and the Church "into all truth."

He is to "testify of," to bear witness to, Christ, and they are to be raised to the dignity of being united with God the Holy Ghost in the life of witness. "Ye also shall bear witness."

The Master in His love for His people does not hide from them the animosity which they are to meet with from the world. The witness is to be borne in the world. There would be no witness if there were no opposition.

"But these things," both concerning the opposition of the world which they were to expect, and the strength on which they were to rely, He tells them of *now*, that "when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

Love forewarns, and love forearms.

Consider how our Blessed Lord, in answer to our prayers, gives us always more "than we can ask or think."

He leaves the world, and as we beseech Him not to leave us "orphans," He gives us, through the power of

the Holy Ghost, His own Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar:

> "I will not leave you comfortless, *I* will come to you."

We live under the dispensation of God the Holy Ghost. All the Sacraments derive their efficacy from His work in the Church. He is ever testifying of Jesus.

Born of water and the Spirit in Baptism, we receive His sevenfold gifts in Confirmation; through the power of the Spirit the gift of Absolution is vouchsafed to us.

Through the same power the material gifts become to us the Body and Blood of Christ the Lord.

At the Altar we find "this same Jesus" witnessing by His Presence to the Father's love, and strengthening us to bear witness to Him in the world.

We worship for a few brief moments in His Sacramental Presence: it is that we may be prepared for His Eternal Presence in Heaven.

We lift up our hearts before His Altar Throne: it is that we may be prepared for exaltation unto the same place whither He is gone before, and for the endless worship before the Throne of Glory.

Pray for—

(i.) The cleansing power of the Holy Spirit in your soul, that you may be worthy of Communion with the King of Glory.

(ii.) His illuminating power, that you may behold "this same Jesus."

(iii.) His abiding Presence, that you may bear witness to Jesus bravely, in your life and conversation.

Whitsunday

The Collect.—God, Who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts ii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John iii. 16.

Our Heavenly Father, "as at this time," fulfils the promise of His Son, and sends forth the Holy Ghost "to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before."

> "Come from the four winds, O breath. . . . And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

It is the birthday of the Holy Catholic Church. The breath of God has come upon it, even the life-giving Spirit of God; it lives, will live to eternity, and its members, through the power of the Holy Ghost in progressive ages, have become "an exceeding great army."

The Epistle tells us of the descent of the Gift which Christ had promised.

In the Gospel Christ Himself tells us of the purpose of the Gift.

The Collect gives us a prayer for His efficacious work upon us the members of the Church.

In reading the account given in the Epistle, we note the outward signs which attended the coming of the Holy Ghost.

(*a*) The "sound as of a rushing mighty wind," which "filled all the house."

(*b*) The "cloven tongues, like as of fire," which "sat upon each of them."

The sound was of "a rushing mighty wind," indicative of power and majesty indeed, but implying that the operation of this Gift was to be—like the air of heaven—unseen, except by its effects.

It "filled all the house;" filled with the "breath of life," the holy Church became "life"—the spiritual Mother of all the children of God.

"The fire distributing from the one source, in separate tongues, is the evidence of the *one gift*, the same to all, and yet 'divided to every man severally as God will.' '*It* sat upon *each*,' and 'they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost.'"

The Collect speaks of the "light of the Holy Ghost," and it will be best to take this one thought to-day among the many which press upon our attention. It is applicable to so much of our Master's teaching in the Gospel.

"The Holy Ghost the *Comforter*." In what, we may ask, does the promised comfort consist? In the gift of *light*.

The world wanders in the darkness of night and uncertainty. Man's wisdom at its best is but fallible.

Christ's promise to His Church is, "Another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the *Spirit of Truth.*" "He will guide you into all truth." "He shall teach you all things."

Consider the *comfort* involved in membership in the Holy Catholic Church, thus indwelt and instructed by the Spirit of Eternal Truth.

> "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life. And I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church."

The words acquire their fullest, deepest meaning as we recite them on Whitsunday.

"The world cannot receive" Him, "because it seeth Him not." To us is given the Divine gift of faith by which we *do* see Him working through the ministry and sacraments of the Church, and we "know" Him by the operation of His light-giving power within our souls.

"The world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me"—by the light of God the Holy Ghost:

> "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* Myself to him."

Through the power of God the Holy Ghost Christ gives His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Through the same power He *manifests* Himself to the loving communicant.

We dare hardly speak of the wonders of such manifestations. They are at once our memories, and our hope.

> "He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

We read our Bibles, and they are but dull records to us,

unless the light of the Holy Ghost shines upon the pages, revealing to us "the things" of Christ, and showing us the outlines of His Sacred Form.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." It is the light of the Holy Spirit in the dark places of our life which brings peace.

When we walk in His light, our heart is not troubled, neither are we afraid.

"Hereafter I will not talk much with you;" but the Holy Spirit speaks in the silence of our souls, and His light illumines our understanding.

Beholding, in His light, "the wonderful works of God," the wonders of His grace, His work in the Sacraments, we are amazed and marvel.

The same thought runs through the Collect. "God, Who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by sending to them *the light* of Thy Holy Spirit."

It was the special need of the Apostles. Light on the teaching already received. Light in their new responsibilities. Light as to their future conduct.

God's gifts are ever in accordance with man's most urgent needs.

The prayer for ourselves is twofold, founded on the experience of the Apostles:

1. Prayer for a right judgment in all things.
2. "Evermore to rejoice in His Holy Comfort."
   1. The gift of illumination.
      (*a*) The indwelling Presence and Power of God the Holy Ghost in the Church in its corporate capacity, giving efficacy to the sacraments, illuminating it, and directing its rulers.

(*b*) The indwelling Presence and Power in individual members giving efficacy to their feeble endeavours to worship and to follow Christ, illuminating them in the difficulties of their daily life.

Consider the necessity of "a right judgment," not only in great crises, but in the ordinary events of life, evidenced by the urgency of our demands for the advice and counsel of earthly friends.

How seldom we seek or rely upon that "spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of knowledge," which has been bestowed upon us through the operation of God the Holy Ghost.

Our inclination is ever to look to the human and not to the divine. We walk by sight and not by faith; we do not "walk in the Spirit."

How changed both our prayers and our lives would be if we really believed in the power and willingness of God the Holy Ghost to give us a right judgment in all things.

2. Joy in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

(*a*) The lives of the Apostles, the life of St. Paul, are a testimony to the reality of such joy; "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."

The Apostles sorrowed at the thought of their Master's departure. "Your heart," He said, "shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

After the Ascension "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy." It was the comfort of the Holy Ghost which enabled them to rejoice.

We rejoice as we contemplate the wonders of His grace in the Church and the Sacraments.

Each Baptism, each Ordination, each Absolution, each

Eucharist, is a marvel of His power working silently in our midst.

"Faith sees and hears," and we rejoice in the goodness of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost revealed to us.

"I will give you another Comforter." The Holy Ghost is our Paraclete, our other "Advocate with the Father," our pleader against Satan, who is our accuser. In the holy comfort of this thought we may evermore rejoice.

(*b*) Our special joy in our Whitsun Communion.

We owe so much to Him. As He overshadowed the Blessed Virgin, and was the Divine Agent in the Mystery of the Incarnation, so it is with the Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament.

He overshadows the creatures of bread and wine, and through His operation we receive the Body and Blood of Christ our Lord.

The "bright cloud" rests upon the Altar, and we behold the glory of our King. "It is good for us to be here."

He gives us both *consolation*, the peace of the Divine Presence, the very peace of Heaven, which none can take away, and *strength*, the strength of union with our Lord.

Both these are included in the word *comfort*.

The need of preparation for our Communions at Whitsuntide.

The Holy Ghost must find His dwelling in a holy temple. "Ye are the temple of God." "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

The Spirit of God seeks to lead us into truth concerning our true condition, convinces of sin and of righteousness.

Through the power of the Spirit the ministry of reconciliation is offered to us.

We owe everything to Him: light, leading, strength, knowledge, healing.

He never wearies, never ceases to work with us and in us; His mission is to draw us to Jesus, to sanctify us, to mould us into the Divine Likeness.

Think of the joy of a Communion illuminated by the Light of God, the Holy Ghost.

Pray for—

(i.) A heart full of love and gratitude to the Giver of such a gift.

(ii.) A heart so purified by grace as to be capable of receiving the Divine Light in your Communion.

(iii.) A heart which shall be a garden of the Lord; "enclosed" that the Spirit of God may tarry there; fruitful, because abounding in the fruits of the Holy Ghost.

"Awake, O North wind; and come, thou South; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Trinity Sunday

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hast given unto us Thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; We beseech Thee, that Thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, Who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rev. iv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John iii. 1.

Trinity Sunday—the Festival of the Eternal God Himself: God as He is in Himself, God as He is in His relation to us, His unworthy, but adoring, children and servants.

"A door is opened in Heaven," and from the far distance, with eyes which, dulled by sin, shrink from the Vision of Holiness, and yet long to see, we gaze upon the Vision unfolded.

The intensity of light dazzles us; we catch echoes of heavenly music; we behold a Throne, and in the glory ineffable we discern a Form.

But we dare not look; we can only bow our heads and murmur our feeble echo to the hymn of praise:

> "Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
> Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,
> Only Thou art holy: there is none beside Thee,
> Perfect in power, in love, in purity."

Three Holies, and yet One Holy. Three Persons, and yet One God, "Which was, and is, and is to come." The Eternal Who containeth all things in Himself, the past, the present, and the future.

"I was in the Spirit," saith St. John, and it is only they who are "in the Spirit," whose souls have been cleansed by the operation of the Spirit, who can discern the wonders of the Festival of our God.

Read the clauses of the Athanasian Creed—

"The Catholic Faith is this: That we worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."

"The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all One: the glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal."

"The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God."

"And yet They are not Three Gods: but One God."

It is in this faith "We beseech Thee, that Thou wouldest keep us stedfast."

It is the Faith of revelation; the Faith of the "One Catholic and Apostolic Church;" the Faith of our hope, as it is the Faith of our need.

The mystery is so vast, so deep, so incomprehensible. And yet to us, with the needs and yearnings of which we are conscious, it seems so simple, so natural, the one thing which could make life bearable and possible.

The Father, Who wills our salvation, is God, Almighty.

The Son, Who came to do His Father's Will, is able to accomplish the work, for He too is God, Almighty.

The Holy Ghost, Who was sent from Heaven to perfect the work of man's sanctification, He too is God, Almighty.

"And yet They are not Three Gods, but One God."

The Epistle contains the vision of the worship of the Eternal Trinity in Heaven, granted by the illumination of the Spirit to the beloved disciple.

There are the Throne, and the "One" that sat on the Throne; the four-and-twenty elders who worshipped; the seven lamps and the sea of glass; the four beasts and the endless song of praise,—the acknowledgment of the Trinity in Unity, "Holy, Holy, Holy."

In the Gospel, too, "a door is opened," the earthly door through which men pass into "the Kingdom of God."

In the Gospel are the waters of Baptism, and the Spirit, the Divine Agent of the new birth into the family of the Eternal Father.

As the two passages stand side by side, they teach us the great truth that the Sacrament of Holy Baptism has the first and fullest relation to, and revelation of, the Holy Trinity.

Both in the Baptism of our Lord in Jordan, and in the Baptism which He ordained, are manifested the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

We note the line of the argument of our Blessed Lord with Nicodemus. Taken in reverse order its clauses become steps by which we mount upwards to gaze through the door opened in heaven.

"No man hath ascended up to heaven." There is no earthly path of knowledge, of scientific investigation, of reason by which man can enter into the mysteries of God's Being.

True, we do "believe earthly things, things outside our experience and beyond our power of explanation." How

can we refuse to believe "the heavenly things," regeneration, the hidden work of the Spirit, the laws of the unseen kingdom?

We receive both on testimony, and the testimony on which we believe the "heavenly things" is contained in our Lord's own words, in themselves a revelation of the Trinity.

"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." "We," Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

> "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One" (1 John v. 7).

The worship of heaven as portrayed in the Epistle is the worship of "the Unity of God, in the power of the Divine Majesty," acknowledging "the glory of the Eternal Trinity."

Who then are these "four-and-twenty," and these "four" who teach the Church of every age to find its highest act of worship in the echo and reflection of the Eternal Trisagion?

The Hebrew name for the Old Testament is "the Twenty-Four," and the interpretation is of great antiquity that the "four-and-twenty elders" represent the books of the Old Testament—the elder dispensation, the "four," the Gospels of the New Testament and dispensation.

Thus, the light which shines through the open door reveals to us the true Faith of the Holy Trinity, not only in the New Testament, but in the Old also.

The Collect breathes the spirit of our Master's teaching. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit, not the result of human intelligence or endeavour.

God has given unto us, His servants, "grace," the grace of illumination, "by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity."

How contrary to the modern spirit of latitudinarianism, which would abolish Creeds and explain away the foundations of the Faith.

The revelation, and the faith by which we accept the revelation, are alike the gift of God.

The confession of a true faith is no mere acquiescence in a dogmatic statement. It is the surrender of our being to Him in Whom we believe, and Who has revealed Himself to us as existing according to a threefold life.

Upon the foundation of our most holy Faith our moral and spiritual lives are to be built up.

Steadfast in this Faith, we can resist the enemy of our souls, and so be defended from all adversities.

When we lose sight of the Faith our adversaries overwhelm us.

We forget the Fatherhood of God, and rebel against what we consider the strictness of the laws of His Kingdom.

We forget God our Saviour, and close our ears to the Voice which pleads from Calvary and from the Altar.

We resist, we grieve the love of God the Holy Ghost, refuse to obey His counsel and His godly motions, and to listen to His pleadings within our souls.

We neglect, forget, yes, we despise the very love of God Himself, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

And yet we cannot altogether forget, for in the Eucharist God is with us, so often and so near.

The Eucharist is a daily revelation of the Eternal Trinity.

God the Father provides the Victim and accepts the Sacrifice.

God the Son presents the Sacrifice of Calvary, His Body broken and his Blood outpoured.

God the Holy Ghost descends upon the Sacrifice, even as he descended upon the Virgin Mother, that the Bread may become the Body of Christ and the Wine His Blood.

We, who were baptized into the name of the Eternal Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are admitted into the Divine Communion; we are made one with God, and God with us.

We dare not look, but we seem to see. We dare not listen, and yet we hear. A door is opened in heaven; the sights, the sounds are not of earth, but of the heavenly courts.

We cast the crown of our life—be it what it may—before the Altar Throne of God, joining in the very song of heaven:

> "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."
>
> "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

In *Preparation*—

> "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

In *Communion*—

"If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Thou only art Holy: Thou only art the Lord: Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

First Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. John iv. 7. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xvi. 19.

Practical Christianity—"Shew me thy faith by thy works"—seems to be the predominant thought as we pass from the round of doctrinal teaching, culminating in Trinity Sunday, which has characterised the first half of the Church's year.

The teaching of the Church flows on in orderly course. The lesson of one Sunday issues from that of the preceding. We take up the thought, the spiritual attitude, we were taught during the previous week.

"This is the Catholic Faith," and that Faith in full sequence has been made to pass before us.

The Love of God in sending His Son; the Love of the Son in coming; the Love of the Holy Ghost, first in co-operating in the work of man's redemption, and then in perpetual indwelling in the Church of the redeemed.

All this has been set forth amongst us.

God Three, and God One: One in Unity of Being and of Love; "of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things visible and invisible."

All this has been brought before us since last Advent Sunday; and how often before last Advent Sunday?

God, in His Holy Church, is ever teaching us of Himself; teaching us the supreme lesson that "God is Love."

The Father is Love, the Son is Love, and the Holy Ghost is Love. Such is the revelation we have been taught; such the truth we have learnt, perhaps, to realise.

God is Love in Himself and to us who are His children by adoption and grace. By nature fallen, we have been by love restored. Love sought, Love found, Love admitted us into Divine fellowship.

> "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."

The Collect is full of the remembrance of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity. The radiance from the Throne of God's Majesty still shines around us from the vision of last Sunday.

With Majesty is bound up the thought of *power*—"upholding all things by the word of His power"—and the highest development of power is the power of Divine Love.

"O God," we say, "Three Persons in One God, in contemplation of the Majesty of Thy power we, Thy children, are conscious of our own utter and inherent

weakness, but in weakness venture to approach Thy Throne."

> "Thou Who art the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers."

To God Who is rich in mercy, we draw near in obedience to the Voice of the Divine Son—

> "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. For the Father Himself loveth you."

How we need that power and love! "Through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee." But—"our sufficiency is of God."

The Incarnate Son Who "in the time of this mortal life came to visit us in great humility," so completely identified Himself with our humanity that He said—

> "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do."

"Grant us the help of Thy grace." "The unction of the Holy One" it is which strengthens us with might in the inner man.

Man sees a law, and he desires to attain to its fulfilment, but he is conscious of his own incapacity.

> "Grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed."
>
> "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."
>
> "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Consider the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity co-operating in the work of man's sanctification.

God the Father gives His Son that we may see and know His will.

God the Son, in His human Life, gives us the one perfect pattern of all life.

God the Holy Ghost gives us the power, through our incorporation with the Son, to live the Son's true life.

How wonderful, how beautiful, and yet how simple it all is!

To be "religious," to be "good," as we so often wish to be, and fail to be because we do not know what the words mean. What is it really? To please God. Just the old child-like relation and motive of our younger and better days, when to please the father or the mother of the old home was in itself our religion and our motive.

> "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."
>
> "Who pleased not Himself."

His service was perfect both "in will and deed."

> "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me."
>
> "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

The will was the will of Love; the work was the work of Love.

Love in will and Love in work was the life of the Incarnate Son, and Love was only satisfied when the Will of God in a world's salvation was accomplished.

By the work of the Son of God man was brought back from self-love to the knowledge of his Father, to appreciation of the perfect law of liberty, to the knowledge of the possibilities of the highest service—the pleasing of God in the keeping of His commandments both in will and deed.

How naturally the Epistle follows on such a prayer:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

There is the motive of all true charity. Loved of God—and He has *proved* His love to us beyond all dispute—we *must* love our fellow-men.

The love of God is active; our love is not worthy of the name unless it exhibits itself in practical concern for the welfare of our fellow-men.

Further, love for our fellow-men must flow out of our love for God.

There can be no true love for God if there be no love for man as its fruit. There can be no true love for man unless it issues from our love for God:

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?"

"This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

The commandment is one difficult, in so many circumstances, to obey, do you say?

Yes, but God's grace triumphs over difficulties.

"Grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee."

The Gospel contains our Master's most solemn warning

to those who fail to obey His commandment "in will and deed."

The rich man was not an open and notorious sinner. There was no sin in the possession of riches. The sin lay in his use of them.

He was probably even a religious man, with a knowledge of religious truth. But his religion was the love of self, not the love of God and of man.

His sin was purely negative—the sin of omission. He did not do what he ought to have done in the discharge of his responsibilities. "Inasmuch as ye did it *not*."

Negative sin, the sin of omission, is so easily overlooked. "I am not as other men are," we are so apt to say, and in saying it we blind our eyes to our defects.

We are not told there was any other virtue in the poor man's poverty. We gather only he used it aright.

> "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."
>
> "The rich man also died, and was buried."

What a contrast the words contain!

We hear of the *soul* of Lazarus after death. We hear only of the *body* of the rich man.

The one by use of poverty had trained his soul for participation in spiritual joys. The other by misuse of riches had starved his soul altogether.

The stamp affixed in life remains after death. The contrast between the two lives in the unseen world is the consequence of the contrast here.

> "The rich man in torments: not there by the arbitrary judgment of God, but by the working out of the unchangeable law of his own life; he realises now the responsibility of life."
>
> "Lazarus in Abraham's bosom; he, too, now sees

the true end of God's Providence, God's Wisdom and Love in his former life of suffering." [1]

And yet the rich man had done no harm; only just forgotten to do good and realise the responsibilities of his riches and his position!

How we need the warning—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

We have Moses and the prophets. We have One Who rose from the dead. And yet—are we persuaded?

In the Eucharist the Love of God is manifested to us.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

Day by day the Love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is set forth and pleads with us from the Altar.

The propitiation, which is the proof of the Divine Love, is daily pleaded in the Holy Sacrifice.

"I died for you, My children."

The twofold thought which springs from the Eucharist:

"We love Him, because He first loved us."

"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

We cannot doubt God's Love while we have the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

If He there so loves us as to minister to us the abundant riches of His grace, we must in responsive love to Him minister to others of that which He has entrusted to us.

Note how in rubric and exhortations the Church guards the Blessed Sacrament, lest any should draw near in the

[1] "Helps to Meditation," Rev. A. G. Mortimer, D.D.

spirit of uncharity, want of that active charity which God requires.

"Son, remember." How awful, how needful is the warning of the Voice which speaks to us from the Altar.

Remember My Love, and thy coldness to Me, and want of love to My brethren.

Remember "the night cometh, when no man can work."

Remember!

Pray for grace—

(i.) To see the Love of God in the Holy Eucharist.

(ii.) To realise the responsibility of life, and your own present attitude towards the duties entrusted to you.

(iii.) So to live, and so to love, that you may one day hear the gracious words:

"Come ye blessed of My Father; I was an hungered, and ye fed me; thirsty, and ye gave Me drink."

Second Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O Lord, Who never failest to help and govern them whom Thou dost bring up in Thy stedfast fear and love; Keep us, we beseech Thee, under the protection of Thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy Holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. John iii. 13. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xiv. 16.

The teaching of this Sunday follows very closely upon that of the preceding.

We prayed then in the Collect that in keeping of God's commandments we might please Him.

And in the Epistle we learnt of one special commandment, "That he who loveth God love his brother also."

The love of God is the foundation of love of man as man.

The Gospel gave us the awful warning of our gracious Lord as to the inevitable consequence of disregard of His commandments.

Dives loved self and forgot the love of God. Hence he omitted to use the gifts of God for the benefit of his fellow-man, and was "tormented in this flame."

"Son, remember." The words still sound in our ears, warning us while the day of salvation lasteth.

The Collect to-day seems to take up both thoughts—the command and the warning.

"Fear" and "love"; the words are twice repeated.

> "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to *fear* Him, and to *love* Him with all my heart."
>
> "That it may please Thee to give us an heart to love and dread Thee, and diligently to live after Thy commandments."

And yet, "Perfect love casteth out fear." How can we reconcile the statements?

1. There is a wrong fear which is incompatible with love, based upon a misconception of God's attributes.

Such is the fear of those who know neither God's "Holy Name" nor His "good Providence."

2. There is a right fear which belongs to us as sinners.

> "He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

Until love is perfected this fear has its place and office in religion.

So long as there is that within us which is contrary to God's commandments, the fear is needed as an instrument of painful discipline.

3. There is a "godly fear" which belongs to us as the children of God.

It is a fear which drives us not from Him, but binds us ever closer to Him.

It is a spirit of filial reverence which grows with the growth of love, and increases with advancing knowledge of God's Holy Name.

God brings up His children in this fear and love.

"O Lord, Who *never failest*," we say, to "help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy *stedfast* fear and love."

Note the correspondence between the different clauses of the Collect.

God "never fails" in His care and oversight of us: we should never fail, *i.e.* be "stedfast" in our fear and love of Him; they should be "perpetual."

What a picture of the infinite Love of God our Father for us His children the words contain.

He never fails to help and govern those whom as children He is bringing up.

His "good providence" watches over them, anticipates the trials and difficulties of their growth, and provides for their protection in the hour of need.

The dangers are perpetual; the care is perpetual; therefore the fear and love of Him into Whose Holy Name we have been baptized must be perpetual also.

The Epistle follows directly upon this thought.

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

The Apostle, speaking by the Spirit of God, warns the members of Christ's Church.

In the midst of a world which, having persecuted Christ, will also persecute them, they need never-failing help and governance, the assurance of the Divine protection. Forewarned is fore-armed.

Love is the test of reality in religion. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

If last Sunday the principle of love was inculcated, to-day, we may say, the practical fruits of love are insisted upon:

"Whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of

compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Belief in the Holy Name of the Incarnate Son and love of our neighbour are "the commandments of God."

How shall "we know that we are of the truth," and so "assure our hearts before Him"?

By the fact that we love, in all the fulness of the word's meaning: love God, and love man; thus fulfilling the law, the twofold law to which Epistle and Gospel testify.

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue." Not even the profession of orthodoxy or the utterance of emotional feeling will suffice.

"But in deed and in truth." Active religious service; *that* is the true and only test.

The "perpetual fear and love" of the Collect are clearly marked in the Gospel.

"We love Him because He first loved us." And the love of His good Providence, to which our love ought to respond, is shown in the gracious invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready."

The warning that we should *fear*, lest we come into a like condemnation, is contained in the final clause, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper."

The cause of their ultimate rejection was that they evinced neither love nor fear.

There was no gratitude shown for the invitation given or for the abundance of the provision. There was no fear of the consequences of rejection.

The pleas which they put forward are not those of sinful-

ness or unworthiness. Simply preoccupation or indifference.

There was no hostility, only "they all with one consent began to make excuse."

The unsatisfied love of God. He *must* have His House filled; He will even *compel* men to come in.

> "The lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

What a lesson for God's servants, His priests, as to the urgency of the work entrusted to them.

The good Providence of God is over all, the spiritually "poor and maimed and halt and blind." They have to be sought for, to be rescued, to be brought to the knowledge of His fear and love.

"He who loveth God" will "love his brother also." Both priests and laity, loving God, will unite in the work of rescue. "Yet there is room."

How needful is the warning of Christ in this parable!

We are those to whom at "supper time," which is the fulness of time, the closing of the day of opportunity, God sends forth His Son with the invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready."

The "Great Supper" is the provision which God has made in His Kingdom, the Church, to satisfy the spiritual needs of His children.

The privileges of that Kingdom are freely offered, and their acceptance is the happiness of those who love and fear the Giver of all good gifts.

The unwillingness to make use of the privileges, the

putting forward of excuses, are the evidence of the absence of love and fear.

Consider our own attitude to the invitation of Christ in His Church, especially with reference to the Holy Eucharist.

He Who "never fails to help and govern those whom He brings up," has in His good Providence provided for His children bounteous grace in the Sacraments of His Church.

And His children, knowing that the provision made by their All-wise Father must be both useful and necessary, willingly obey His invitation?

Alas! far otherwise. How we shrink from the Sacrament of Penance. How easy it is to find excuse why we should avoid, postpone, neglect our Confessions.

We say that we value the daily Mass above everything; but how rarely we attend.

Jesus waits at the Altar, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready."

And we—we are unready. Any excuse is good enough to keep us back from our Communions.

Where, alas! is the "perpetual fear and love" in which we pray to be kept?

And yet, the Love of Jesus never varies. He never fails in willingness to help and govern. He calls us daily from the Altar to come to the sheltering protection of His good Providence.

Ask Him to give you—

(i.) Sorrow for lack of godly fear and of love to God and man.

(ii.) Such a vision of His Love in inviting you to the Holy Eucharist as shall put to flight all hollow excuses.

(iii.) Grace to bring your powers, which are halt, maimed, blind, and lame, to Him, that His Heavenly Banquet may fill them with fresh life and vigour.[1]

[1] "A Year of Eucharists."

Third Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom Thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by Thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. Peter v. 5. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xv. 1.

There seems almost a distant echo of Whitsuntide in the Collect for to-day.

"Leave us not comfortless; but send to us Thy Holy Ghost to comfort us," we said on the Sunday after Ascension.

"That we, to whom Thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may be *comforted*," we say to-day.

And the "hearty desire" is the gift of God's Holy Spirit; for "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," and breathes into our souls the wish to pray and the power to pray aright.

> "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications."

Our prayer is called forth by the sense of danger, of our weakness, and our need.

God's "good Providence" *defends* us, His Holy Spirit

comforts us as we encounter the danger and experience the adversities:

"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee."

Of God's willingness to hear we can have no doubt. We appeal to Him to hear us "mercifully," being so conscious of our need of mercy—

(*a*) Because of our neglect of prayer, and of our coldness and want of faith when we do pray.

(*b*) Because of our ingratitude and forgetfulness when God has vouchsafed an answer to the prayers uttered in time of danger and adversity.

(*c*) Because of our want of effort to render our prayers effective, *e.g.* "Lead us not into temptation," and we take no pains to avoid temptation.

The remembrance of the past makes us ask for a merciful hearing of our prayers.

The Epistle shows us what are the dangers and adversity to which we are exposed.

Only the "mighty aid" of God our Father can defend and comfort us.

"Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith:" the faith, the Catholic Faith, faith in the Incarnation, and in the Sacraments of Christ's Holy Church.

We are not alone in the conflict, for "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

"I believe in the Communion of Saints." "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

"Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, . . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Because of our own frailty and past yielding, as well as because of the malignity of Satan, the danger must be great, the adversity must be keen.

But "the Mighty Hand of God" overrules all for our perfecting.

His power is contrasted with our weakness, so often self-caused. Hence the exhortation to humility.

His purpose is to "exalt us," but—"he that *humbleth* himself shall be exalted."

In the midst of the storm of adversity there comes the rainbow of hope. "He careth for you."

> "In the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."
>
> "And straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

Consider the defence and comfort of the Presence of Jesus

Note the eternal purpose of God, and the means by which its fulfilment is to be accomplished:

> "The God of all grace, Who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus."

He has called us into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus now, through virtue of our Baptism. He wills that we should be partakers of that glory in its fulness hereafter:

> "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me."

But to be partakers of His glory, we must be partakers of His sufferings:

> "After that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

The grace of the "God of all grace" is sufficient for us;

it can, and will, stablish, strengthen, perfect those who accept the loving discipline of their Heavenly Father.

The Gospel contains points which illustrate the teaching we have gathered from the Epistle.

The publicans and sinners, from a sense of sin, and a realised need, have "a hearty desire" to "hear Him." They draw near with humility to the Friend of sinners.

It is a repetition of that which we saw last Sunday when the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind were brought in.

They are contrasted with the Pharisees and Scribes, the self-righteous, who are not "clothed with humility."

And yet, from these self-righteous ones we have the highest testimony to the Saviour's love:

> "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."
> "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

It is our sole hope, our sole ground of confidence—"This Man receiveth *sinners*."

We know ourselves to be sinners. As we listen to His gracious invitation to approach the Holy Eucharist, we realise our true position.

What hope would there be for us in this life, or in death, if we did not believe that Jesus is willing to receive *sinners*?

> "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Who are they whom Christ invites to sit at meat with Him in the Holy Eucharist? Sinners who have repented of their sins.

"Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort."

"Come unto Me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

"This is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

The whole service of the Holy Eucharist is full of the same thought:

"We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy Table."

"O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."

Truly, "this Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Two parables are included in the Gospel, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Piece of Money.

The sheep, though lost, belongs to the Man, its owner, still. The piece of money, though lost, bears still its Maker's "image and superscription."

The ninety and nine—the self-righteous—are left, that the one lost sheep may be found.

It is Christ Himself in the first parable Who seeks; it is the Church in the second.

But the work of saving is the same; the unwearied search is the same. "*Until* He find it;" "*till* she find it."

How marvellous is the Love of Jesus! In spite of all the rebellion, ingratitude, foolish, wayward wandering of the lost sheep, He goes on seeking "*until He finds it.*"

The joy of the Saviour, the joy of the Angels of God, over "one sinner that repenteth."

No means have been neglected; day and night the search has gone on. The father has waited long years for his son's return; Christ has sought; the Holy Spirit has pleaded.

At last love has won the victory. The sheep is found, the lost piece of money has been regained.

> "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Perhaps we can trace our own history in the parable; —"*was* lost, and *is* found."

Perhaps Christ still searches upon the mountains, and His Church still seeks, because we still wander heedlessly.

Perhaps, still wrapped in the pride of self-righteousness, we have no consciousness of sin, and consequently no hearty desire to be delivered from the dangers with which the Good Shepherd sees us to be surrounded.

Perhaps the Angels still tarry, unable to raise the song of triumph, because we put off repentance.

Jesus seeks us in the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Spirit pleads with us.

God waits for our prayers, is ready to defend and comfort us, be our needs what they may. All turns upon our willingness.

In preparation for your Communion, pray—

(i.) For "hearty desire;"

(ii.) For the grace of humility;

(iii.) For willingness to accept the loving discipline of "the God of all grace."

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us Thy Mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal: Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Romans viii. 18. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke vi. 36.

As children of the Holy Church, brought up in "stedfast fear and love," and possessed of a "hearty desire," we place our trust in God as our Protector in all dangers and adversities.

The knowledge which these dangers and adversities has brought has been the knowledge of

(*a*) Our weakness and insufficiency;

(*b*) The root of that weakness, viz. sin.

And so with joy and trust we turn to One in Whom is a strength which is capable of communication to us: Whose Holiness, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, can, in a measure, be formed in us His members.

"Strength and holiness." How the lack of the qualities which these two words express runs through all our self-examination before our Communions.

"Weakness and unholiness," those are what we bewail. Weakness of purpose, weakness of resolution, weakness of the will.

Unholiness in thought, word, and deed: even in our best moments, even before the Altar.

"Without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy."

Yes, there lies the secret of our failure. If the life be lived *apart* from God, "without" Him, without reliance upon grace, only in our own strength and sense of goodness—what wonder is it that we fail?

And our prayer is the heaven-taught prayer of trust, of confidence, of boldness.

"Your Father is merciful," says the First-Begotten, in the Gospel for to-day; and so we, "the sons of God," dare to say, "increase and multiply upon us Thy Mercy."

We own that it has been extended to us already; but, as we "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," as the consciousness of weakness and unholiness presses hard upon us, our need and trust combined find expression in the cry, "increase and multiply Thy Mercy."

And God, "Who is rich in Mercy," meets His children in the Sacrament of the Altar, that He may "give them meat enough."

> "He rained down manna upon them for to eat: and gave them food from heaven."
>
> "Who giveth food to all flesh: for His Mercy endureth for ever."

What willingness must have been revealed in God our Father, for us to be encouraged to make such petitions!

Our Communions are so frequent, and each Communion

is an opportunity for the increase and multiplying of the outpouring of Mercy.

Surely we *ought* to "go from strength to strength," till we appear before our God in Sion, with the thanksgiving of our lives for mercies numberless.

And how is the Mercy for which we pray to be manifested to us?

In governance and guidance. "That Thou being our Ruler and Guide."

Self-rule leads to misery: God's rule leads to peace and rest.

"The wicked"—those whose lives are ruled by self—"are like the troubled sea." But, "Great is the peace that they have who love Thy law."

"We must accept all the circumstances of life, with the duties which arise out of them, as being God's law for our own selves."

"Thus shall we find a delight in everything, whether of joy or sorrow, because it is to us a means of glorifying God."[1]

> "Out of thee" — Bethlehem — "shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel."
>
> "I have appointed Him"—the true Solomon—"to be Ruler over Israel and over Judah."

"He taught as One having authority," and to His commands we are bound to render obedience:

> "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another."

Listen to His words in the Gospel for to-day:

> "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

[1] "The Way of Holiness," Rev. R. M. Benson.

"Judge not," "condemn not;" "forgive." They are the decrees of our Ruler, and we who pray for a merciful judgment, and know what forgiveness means, must not fail in the duty of obedience.

He Who commands has also set us the example of obedience, "Lo, I come, to do Thy Will, O God."

God, in Christ, is alike the Rule and Guide of all human lives, from the cradle to the grave.

Born of the Virgin Mary—Child—Boy—Man—sharing the sorrows as the joys of life. "He suffered and was buried."

Through all the stages of life's journey, through all the circumstances of that life, He, and He only, is the Ruler and the Guide:

> "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."
>
> "And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me."

And why do we need such a Ruler and Guide? Because of the peril in which we stand.

"That we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal"—"the glory which shall be revealed" of the Epistle.

"The things eternal," these may be lost. How? By the misuse of the things temporal.

> "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."
>
> "Unto one He gave five talents; to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability."
>
> "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

The loss of the things eternal was the consequence of unprofitable use of the things temporal.

He Who came to share these "things temporal," and Who, in the Blessed Sacrament, still clothes Himself in the accidents of things perishable, came to give us an example in all duties and relationships of life.

He on the Cross could look *up* to God His Father, *down* upon His Mother, *around* upon His disciples, and in full consciousness of duty done at every point, could rest upon the Love Eternal:

> "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

On the Cross He forgave, He condemned not, He showed mercy.

Can we withhold obedience to the commands of such a Teacher, such a Guide?

In the Blessed Sacrament He, the same Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, still meets His brethren.

Every word of the Collect seems to find its fulfilment in Him.

Trembling, we yet put our trust in Thee, and Thou art our Protector.

Weak, and conscious of unholiness, we yet dare to draw near to Thee, the Fountain of all strength and holiness.

We have known Thy mercy, and yet our necessities and our falls make us plead for further manifestations of that mercy, against which we own we have presumed.

We would not lose the sight of Thy glory. In our better moments we long to see Thee, to be with Thee where Thou art.

But "I find a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."

In the Holy Eucharist He draws near Who knows, with

the knowledge of perfect experience, *all* our trials and difficulties and dangers.

He draws near Who knows, with an all-perfect knowledge, our weaknesses and our desires, our shrinkings and our hopes.

"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

"And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them."

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him."

True, we fear, because life is so awful, its issues so momentous, the "things temporal" so soon to vanish away.

But, "Be not afraid, for I am with Thee."

We go back from our Communion, from the presence of Eternal Love, to the shadows of earth, with the promise sounding in our ears:

"The Lord is my Shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing."

"He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort."

"Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever."

Fifth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. Peter iii. 8. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke v. 1.

Fret, worry, anxiety—how much we know about them as we pass so quickly through the weeks which hurry by! "The heart knoweth its own bitterness;" and who among us is free from cares of one form or another?

Peace, joy, quiet service—well, we look for them, we hope for them; but again and again we say, "Not here; some day perhaps, in the better land—if by God's grace we reach it—that land where 'His servants shall serve Him,' and joy and peace at length be perfected."

And yet the Master said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

The words are words of *power;* of One Who not only has the *wish* but the right to bestow that of which He speaks.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation." He hides nothing from them; the tribulation must come, for the chaff must be winnowed from the wheat.

"The trial of your faith worketh patience;" but "be of

good cheer," "your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

How the Collect for this week seems to gather up such thoughts—the very thoughts we, fretted, worried, anxious beings want; bringing them like a strain of heavenly music to our ears, as we meet in preparation for our Communion with our Lord.

We are the children of the Church, living in the midst of the world; in it, yet not of it. And we draw near to Him Whose rule is over all, over the Church, the world, and our individual lives.

"Grant," we say, "that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness."

"Pacifice nobis," the old Collect said; "make peace for us," that Thy Church may serve Thee "in tranquillâ devotione."

We can understand what the words must have meant when the Church was surrounded with bitter persecution, and what significance they would have on the lips of those who might, at any hour, be called upon to face the sword or fire of martyrdom.

Still we need no less than they to pray that the world may be ordered by God's governance.

The dangers which surround the Church of Christ may change, but they do not diminish.

The only foundation of peace for her children lies in unshaken faith in the Living Power of Christ her Head, and in unswerving attachment to the Person of Him Who is our Redeemer and our King.

This, and this only, can lead to godly quietness and tranquil devotion.

Turning to the Epistle and Gospel, we find in both of them the means by which God proposes to accomplish what we ask; the Epistle setting before us our part, and the Gospel God's part in this result.

Our part in the accomplishment of this result is self-government, in our relation to each other and in our relation to the world.

See what a list of virtues it is which is set before us for our example and our peace.

Unity, compassion, brotherly love, pity, courtesy, restraint in words, truthfulness—what peace there would be in home and heart and life if we honestly cultivated such virtues!

How many of the frets and worries and anxieties, of which we complain so often, are after all of our own making; how many would disappear if only we were Christians in deed as well as name.

If only we were compassionate to one another's weaknesses, pitiful of each other's faults, restrained in conversation, forbearing under provocation, what a different world it would be; should we not indeed inherit a blessing, even the blessing of peace?

And then comes in the motive, the reason why we should thus rule and restrain our lives and spirits.

It is the constraining thought of the ever-present Divine Governance:

> "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers."

How the "tranquil devotion" *must* issue from such a faith, such a recollection!

"Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?"

The Gospel, half miracle, half parable, is full of suggestiveness in connection with the object for which the Collect prays.

That object is, "not the peaceable ordering of the world for its own sake, but the world at peace, in order that the Church may joyfully serve God in godly quietness."[1]

The Gospel sets before us the Church as in a picture; there is the "one" ship, which is Simon's, into which the Lord enters.

"It is 'one' to note the unity of the Church; Simon's, to note its Catholicity. (It cannot be the mark of exclusive personal preference, because Andrew is with him.)"[1]

The world is represented under two figures, "the shore" and "the deep." The Church, like the ship, is by God's command "thrust out a little from the land."

Thrust out; because her very purpose and idea is to be separated from the world; to be "in it, yet not of it."

And yet only a little thrust out, because she must take her part in the interests and occupations, the joys and sorrows of men.

Launching out "into the deep," different as the figure seems, has much in it of the same truth.

The Church is in the world, not to partake of its restlessness, but to catch men out of it.

[1] Bishop Doane.

The Church is bidden to let down into the troubled waters of the world the woven net of dogmatic teaching, and thereby to rescue souls from the fret and change and turmoil of life, and take them into its peace.

Under whichever figure we consider the Church, "thrust out a little from the land," or engaged in the active work involved in launching "out into the deep," there is peace in her midst, joy in her service, for

> "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early."
>
> "Therefore shall we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea."
>
> "Though the waters thereof rage and swell: and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same."
>
> "The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our Refuge."

We cannot pass by the picture which the Gospel gives us of the effect which the manifestations of Christ's power had upon St. Peter:

> "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The Presence of the All-Holy brought to him only the consciousness of his own fallen and lost condition; he is filled with a sense of unworthiness and consequent dread, and prays the Lord to depart from him.

How different is the scene on that still, calm morning after the Resurrection, when again the Lord stands by the lake, and again works the miracle of love and power:

> "Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter

heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea."

Nothing now can keep him from his Lord. No longer does he say "Depart"; he is filled with consuming desire to reach the Presence of his Saviour, and to rest in devotion at His Feet.

"Thrice fallen, thrice restored!
The bitter lesson learnt,
That heart for Thee, O Lord,
With triple ardour burnt."

Our approach to our Lord to-morrow, in the Blessed Sacrament, is a personal approach.

Each one prepares, each one draws near; but each in a different spirit, each with differing wants and desires.

All, in spirit, want, and desire, are known perfectly and only to Him to Whom we draw near, and in Whose Presence we shall kneel.

Each soul is differently affected by the Presence of the Lord, and the influence of that Presence depends almost entirely upon the soul's condition and upon its preparation:

"To the one . . . a savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

With sin unconfessed, and so unforgiven, we, like St. Peter, dread the Presence of the Holy One, even while we own that by Him, and by Him alone, can we hope to obtain deliverance from those very sins which make us fear.

We know this by experience, do we not? How often have we been glad in our secret hearts of an excuse to stay away from our Communion, making the most of the weather, or of trifling indisposition?

The real truth, which we could not tell to others and would hardly allow to ourselves, was, that we were con-

scious of that within which made us unfit for the Presence of our Lord, and we were unwilling, or too lazy, or too little in earnest, to do that which could make us worthy to approach.

"Depart from me," we said, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Who can take away the sinfulness which thus we own, save "Jesus only"? Who but He can heal and save?

The soul which has witnessed in itself the Resurrection power of Christ, and beheld the wondrous preparations of Divine Love in the Sacraments of the Church, burns with desire to humble itself at the Feet of Jesus.

It longs to pour out the tale of its sorrow and its love, to "behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple."

No difficulty will stand in its way; no thought of bodily discomfort, no fear of opposition or ridicule, will hinder it.

> "Like as the hart desireth the water brooks: so longeth my soul after Thee, O God."
>
> "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?"
>
> "I sought Him, but I found Him not."
>
> "It was but a little while, . . . but I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go."

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, Who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love toward Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. vi. 3. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. v. 20.

Surely there is no more beautiful Collect than this! "The Preparations of Love" might be inscribed at the head of the Services for the day.

God prepares, and His motive is love; man receives, and the condition for reception must be love.

But even that which is thus the condition springs not from man himself; it is the bounteous gift of the Love of God, Who giveth liberally that man may receive fully; and so we say, "Pour into our hearts such love towards Thee."

Yes, "God is Love," and a twofold question suggests itself:

(*a*) What has Love prepared for those who render to Him a love responsive to His own?

(*b*) Have the promises to do with the future only, or are they connected with man in his present life?

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

The natural man cannot comprehend what are the things prepared by the Love of God, but "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

They are future in their fulness, but the present is the preparation of God's Love for the completion of the revelation and the satisfaction.

The supreme satisfaction of man, created by God in His own Image, is the knowledge of God; his highest bliss is to attain to a perfect and unending union with God his Father, his Redeemer, and his Sanctifier; to do from a spirit of perfected love the Will of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

"That they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One."

"If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come and make Our abode with him."

"Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

"And His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His Face; and His name shall be in their foreheads."

God shall be all in all. God alone shall be the joy and the everlasting blessedness of redeemed humanity in the Heavenly City.

It is the Presence of God and of the Lamb, it is the knowledge and love of God and the Lamb, which make the blessedness of the final vision of the Apostle of Love.

It is our dim yearning for that Presence and that knowledge which, keeping alive within us the assurance that we are the children of the Highest, sustains us in the dark struggles of our sinful life, and for the deepening and cultivation of which we find our Loving God has made preparation in the present.

The Gospel and Epistle tell us of the preparation in the present for the obtaining of the promised inheritance.

In the Gospel the old dispensation and the new are sharply contrasted.

"This do and thou shalt live" was the maxim of the old covenant; to "love God above all things" is the demand of the new.

The Scribes and Pharisees kept "the letter," they forgot "the spirit" of the law.

"Our higher, harder standard is to keep them both, letter and spirit, and to learn that what calls itself spiritual religion, despising all forms, is no better than what it calls, somewhat contemptuously, formal religion, because either of these two is just half what God commands."[1]

Christ tells us "go thy way," "be reconciled," "be in charity with all men," and He adds, "*then* come and offer thy gift."

> "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

It is not by despising, but by right and reverent use of

[1] Bishop Doane, "Mosaics."

means of grace that our righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

"Thou shalt not kill," the letter of the old law said, "and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."

Christ says that God's law must be kept by the heart, that love must rule there; sins of thought that lack either the courage or the opportunity of accomplishment are in God's sight as sins committed.

And so by correcting and controlling, not our outward lives only, but "the thoughts and intents of our hearts," our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

It is a hard lesson and a high standard. Who shall learn it; who shall attain unto it?

> "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord: or who shall rise up in His holy place?"

Man alone could not; man had fallen from knowledge, from union, and from love.

But Love is not dead: while God lives Love lives; and God has made provision of love now, that man may re-enter Paradise, and be an inhabitant of "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life," but each step of the heavenly way has its preparation of love, if only, walking in the Spirit, we are illumined by His heavenly light. Those who climb the rugged road are the children of the Cross whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations."

The Epistle takes us back at once to our true foundation

—our new birth in Baptism, and to the consequent "good things" which, through our union with Christ therein, God has prepared for the children on whose love He has so deep a claim.

If only we could realise our position as baptized into Christ, members of the living, loving, victorious, triumphant Lord!

How different things look when we stand by Him; how entirely changed they appear when we stand in Him, in conscious union with Him, and look upon sin with His Eyes, look upon difficulties in union with His Spirit, look upon life as He sees it, look upon ourselves as we are in Him:

> "Dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Each Sunday is a commemoration of the Resurrection, and on each Sunday the Church speaks to those who are willing to listen of a Resurrection life, begun in Baptism, maintained by sacramental grace, "through the power of an endless life."

The righteousness which shall "exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees" becomes a possibility when we contemplate the preparations of love which God has made for His children through sacramental grace.

"Begun, continued, and ended in Thee." How the familiar words describe the risen life of the child of God.

Begun in Baptism; continued, through the power of the Holy Spirit, by Confirmation, Penance, and, above all, by the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—

all of which are the gifts of the Love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

How wonderful it is that God should care so much and prepare so lavishly for us, and that we should care so little and prepare so grudgingly for the reception of His gifts!

"Begun, continued, and *ended.*" Yes, all God's dealings lead onward to the end He has in view. The life must end, where it began, in God:

> "I came forth from the Father, again I leave the world and go to the Father."

It is through union with that Incarnate Life, that we who began and have continued in the life of grace may hope to end in the fruition of His glorious Godhead.

But who shall dare to describe the preparations of Love in that Blessed Sacrament which we hope to approach to-morrow?

We can only take the jewels of the heavenly casket singly; we can take but one thought to-day—the Presence of the Risen Lord.

We come to no dead memorial, no shadow of the past, no fleeting memory.

We come to the Living Presence of "the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief"; the Sin-bearer, the Friend of sinners, the King in His beauty, the Victorious Christ.

"I need Thy presence every passing hour," for I have sorrows which no consolation, no sympathy of earth, can take away; griefs which no tears can assuage, no anguish of remorse alleviate.

I have sins, the burden of which presses my life down to the dust; sins, the memory of which can never leave me,

and the power and persistency of which appal me, even as I bow my head in worship before the Throne of God.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling."

"And that I may go to the Altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness."

"Why art thou so heavy, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me?"

"O put thy trust in God; for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God."

Yes, there in the Sacrament of the Altar, I seek Him Whom my soul desires to love, and there, through the power of the Holy Ghost, I find Him Who bids me to the Sacrifice which "the Lord hath prepared."

All, through Him, may I there offer; all my wishes, my failures, my hopes, my fears, my prayers; all, in the still silence of His Presence, may I pour out into the Ear that never is weary, to the Heart Whose love never shrinks and never can grow cold.

For there is the Living Presence of the Son of God, Who is the Son of Mary, and He waits to be gracious, demanding, week by week, and year by year, "Lovest thou Me?"

Apart from Him I dare not answer; without my Communion I cannot reply.

But when I kneel and receive that highest, best, most wondrous gift of Love; when I, through my communion with that All-Holy Body and that All-Precious Blood, am made "one with Christ and Christ with me," then in that mysterious fellowship with my Saviour, my Master, and my

God, I may venture to breathe the answer which He condescends to seek—

"Lord, Thou knowest all things—all my past, all my present, all my failures, and all Thine own dealings with my soul—Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Jesu, my Lord, I Thee adore,
O make me love Thee more and more."

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Lord of all power and might, Who art the Author and Giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great Mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Romans vi. 19. *The Gospel.*—St. Mark viii. 1.

The Church is ever leading her children into deeper knowledge and fuller appreciation of the truth which it is her mission to teach them.

"Pour into our hearts such love toward Thee," we prayed last Sunday; and now we take up the same word and the same thought, "Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name," the Name of Him Whose true, best Name is Love.

There is such a constant contrast in the Collects between man's weakness and God's Power.

Our Catechism taught us that our duty towards God is to love Him; but, as we also learnt, we are not able to do these things of ourselves.

Experience has taught us the truth of the lesson learnt in childhood, and how far short we have fallen of that which we ought to feel.

Man needs to approach One, Who, as He is the Source,

so also is willing to be the Giver, of that virtue which he feels he so greatly needs.

There is that within which hinders, that which man's own effort seems incapable of removing.

That which he needs must come from *without* himself, and must come from one possessed of power beyond that of which man himself is conscious.

Hence we say not merely "Pour into our hearts," but "graft in our hearts," the love which is Thy due.

See what grafting implies.

To graft you must cut, cut away the old, the wild, the natural, so that the new, the fruitful, may little by little take root and be incorporated in the life of the parent stem.

"My Father is the Husbandman."

"She supposing Him to be the Gardener."

They are true titles: the Lord of all power and might is the Husbandman; the Author and Giver of all good things is the Gardener of the Soul.

It is His Love alone which could see in us any hope of fertility, and His Power alone which could graft in our hardness the love of His Holy Name.

We must be prepared for, we must submit to, the means which He sees fit to use.

He knows what must be cut away in order that the true love may be grafted in.

He knows what is necessary for growth, and it is for us to accept in true humility the operations of His Hand.

"Great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend."

The "true religion," for the increase of which we pray, can only be the fruit of love, of that love which has been grafted in our hearts, and so is one of those "good things"

which, in the original form of the Collect, we ask God to nourish and preserve.

"Ut quæ sunt bona nutrias ac . . . quæ sunt nutrita custodias."

"Nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same," our translation says.

How wonderful is God, the Lord of all power and might, the Author and Giver of all good things, the Nourisher of that which He engrafts, and the constant Preserver of that which He nourishes!

How vain it seems for us to try and exhaust the thought of the boundless wonders of our God!

Yes, *our* God, the God Who holds our lives in the hollow of His Hand; the God Who wills to engraft in our hearts the love of Himself; the God Whose Hand is ever ready to pour out upon us the abundance of His mercy, and Who is intent upon seeing within us the growth of true religion, and upon keeping us in the fellowship of His Love.

The Epistle for last Sunday told us of our incorporation into Christ, our grafting into His Body by Holy Baptism, through which we became "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

To-day we go a step further. We *are* baptized, and God *is* our God; we are His children, and to Him our obedience is due.

"What fruit had ye then?" the Apostle asks—in your natural and ungrafted state—"But now being made free from sin, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

The connection with the thought of the Collect is

apparent, for by grafting, cutting away, we were made free from sin.

The new graft is to bear fruit now, and in the end is to attain everlasting life; and this is "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Gospel sums up everything, Power, Love, gifts, nourishing, preservation.

The multitudes are fainting with hunger, and the Heart of Jesus is filled with compassion.

His Love brings His Power into activity, and He, Who is the Author, becomes the Giver of all good gifts to those who follow Him.

They must put away their own thoughts and reliance upon their own resources, looking henceforth only to Him.

"From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" No man could, and no man can, except He Who is the True Man, the Bread that cometh down from heaven.

They must have grafted in their hearts faith in His Person, in His Love, and in His Power.

They must obey the directions which He conveys—"He commanded the people to sit down." And then He feeds them.

And yet in feeding He uses means, the ministrations of His disciples, the bread and the few small fishes.

He feeds them, and none are sent empty away; all are filled, and yet there is abundance and to spare.

O God, our God, how wonderful art Thou in Thy works! O Jesus, our Jesus, how wonderful art Thou in Thy Love; how unchanging in Thy dealings with the weak, perishing children of men!

We, too, have "nothing to eat." We feed on the things of this world, and they satisfy us not, and our souls are fainting as we strive to follow Thee in the wilderness of the world.

We cling to earth and to earthly hopes, believing still that earth shall give us something, we know not what, which at last shall sustain and satisfy us.

"Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name," and faith in Thy Power. Open to us Thy Hand, and give us that which Thou seest that we need, that nourished by Thee we may attain Jerusalem on high.

And He, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," hears the prayers, the sighings of His people. In the Blessed Sacrament, ministered to us by an earthly ministry, utilising earthly means, the Bread and Wine which we offer upon His Altar in obedience to His command, He provides gifts of boundless grace for His brethren.

His heart yearns with compassion as He looks upon us, and in the Eucharist of His Love He gives us that Bread which is His Body, that Wine which is His Blood.

He desires only to satisfy the true hunger of our souls, to nourish that which is good within us with the Divine Food.

He longs that, by that heavenly communion, true religion, which is rooted and grounded in love, may be increased within us, and that by His abiding Presence with us that which is nourished may be preserved.

Yes, "may be preserved." For "the way" is long, its weariness is great, its dangers many.

His Love is not merely concerned with our present, He looks onwards to the end.

He wishes us to sit down hereafter at the Heavenly

Banquet in the Kingdom of His Father, and the Gifts which He gives *now* are to sustain the soul unto everlasting life.

In *Preparation*—

"Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my Strength: think no scorn of me; lest, if Thou make as though Thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit."

In *Communion*—

"He filled them with the Bread of Heaven."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"God is the Strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Eighth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, Whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; We humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. viii. 12. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. vii. 15.

There is a great resemblance between the Collects for the eighth and the fifteenth Sundays after Trinity in their concluding petitions.

In the former we "humbly beseech" God to "put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us."

In the latter, having acknowledged our own frailty and dependence upon God, we pray Him to "keep us ever by His help from all things hurtful" and to "lead us to all things profitable to our salvation."

The thought of the second of the two Collects is an amplification of that for to-morrow, conveying as it does to us the lesson of the true light in which we are to regard the circumstances of our lives.

The question is whether they are hurtful or profitable to us, not as children of time, but as children of eternity; not as heirs of earthly possessions, but as heirs of salvation: "profitable to our salvation."

"Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." We have by Baptism been grafted into the Body of Christ, and our life is hid with Christ in God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God."

The hurtful things, therefore, are all that hinder, the profitable are those which aid, our spiritual progress and perfecting as the sons of God.

"The sons of God." Yes, "for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

There is the one thought of the day; the note struck in Epistle, Gospel, and Collect.

We through adoption and grace are the sons of God, and God, in Christ, has revealed Himself to us as "Our Father:"

> "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

He, the true Son of God, in His Agony in Gethsemane, thrice prayed, "Abba, Father, . . . not My will, but Thine be done."

And the mark of the sons of God, so the Gospel tells us, is that they too, if they would be glorified with the Son of God, and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, must do the Will of His Father which is in Heaven.

And so now you can tell what the Collect really means when it says, "O God, Whose never-failing Providence."

It is not an unknown irresponsible power which orders

all things by an iron law, taking our lives into the grasp of an inflexible machinery, grinding men and women into one stereotyped pattern, dealing out joys and sorrows blindly.

Indeed, the spirit of bondage and of fear would be ours were *that* the rule under which we rested.

True, God *is* supreme, and is the Lord of all power and might; true, He does order all things in heaven and earth, and they who break His laws do so at their peril, and bring upon themselves the penalty of their disobedience.

But He who rules is "Our Father," and the laws of His Kingdom are dictated by a Love which no words of ours can hope to portray.

He has taken us into union with Himself as His children, the members of His own dear Son.

We live now in the home of God, the Church, and He is preparing us by the discipline, the rule, the order of the earthly home, for the possibility of enjoyment of the Heavenly Home.

That Home it was to which the true Son looked forward with such longing, when, His work on earth being almost done, He said—

> "In My Father's House are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you; . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."

Yes, these words reveal the Mind of Christ, in Whom the Love of the Father is manifested to us.

"Having loved His own, He loved them," and He stills loves them, "to the end."

He looks forward through all which He knows they must suffer and endure as they follow in His steps; He looks forward to the eternal rest and union with Himself which is prepared for those that unfeignedly love Him.

"O God, Whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth"—that then is our prayer.

To God, our Father, we approach as sons, creeping under the shadow of His Almighty wings, because life seems so hard, its disappointments so many, its struggles so incessant.

And as we get close to Him, and lean upon the mightiness of His strength, the darkness begins to clear, and we see the realities of the Divine Fatherhood.

How different life looks when we view it from the shelter of our Father's Almighty wings.

How changed the prospect becomes when we realise, not merely the presence of a Supreme Power, but the fact that each circumstance of our lives is being ordered by the never-failing foresight—Providence—of our Father.

What content, what restfulness, enters into our souls as we realise that the "trials" of life are being ordered by All-perfect wisdom and All-perfect love, in anticipation of that which is to come, that which the Eye of God alone foresees.

> "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

And the Father hears the prayer of His Beloved Son, and of His children as they are united with Him in the Sacrament of the Altar.

In "never-failing Providence" He is so ordering all things now, that the members of His Son may be with Him hereafter in the Eternal Communion of the Father's Home.

"I thought these things had come by chance," we say;

"I thought they were the persecutions of a cruel fate; I rebelled and I fought against them because of the suffering they involved."

"Father! was it Thou Who was ordering all things, and all things for my good?"

"Father! was it Thou Who didst deny me that which I thought so profitable for my present happiness, because Thou didst see it would be hurtful to my soul?"

"O Father of my life, and God of my salvation, give me grace to see Thy Love, and in seeing it, to surrender myself and my will wholly to Thee."

Look into your own lives during this last week. Each cross has been ordered by God, your Father, for good; each joy has been sent by Him for your comfort and your advancement.

The cross and the happiness are only profitable when acknowledged by you as coming from Him, and when made the theme of gratitude at the Holy Eucharist.

Over all your days, your pleasures and your duties, your sorrows and your joys, has rested the guiding, controlling, loving Hand of Him Who is *your* Father, and the Father of your Lord.

To-morrow you will come and gather round the Altar of your God, that there you may receive the Heavenly Food, which shall be profitable to your soul.

There, in union with God's dear Son, you shall learn the spirit of true sonship.

There, with eyes purified by the Divine Communion, and illumined by the Holy Spirit's light, you may see, if but for a little while, the heavenly realities—the Ruling Hand, the Father's Love.

There you may have, for one sweet second, that vision for which Love seeks to prepare you—the vision of the Lamb of God.

In *Preparation*—

"Order my steps in Thy word: and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me."

In *Communion*—

"I come seeking fruit on this fig tree."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Abba, Father, not my will, but Thine be done."

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. x. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xvi. 1.

The Collect is an echo of the concluding words of the Gospel for last Sunday:

> "He that doeth the Will of My Father which is in Heaven."
>
> "That by Thee we may be enabled to live according to Thy Will."

Life is made up of what we think and what we do. The thoughts, the words—which are expressed thoughts—the deeds, make up the record of the day's life.

And so, in our desire to live according to the Will of God, we pray, first of all, that we may think and do always such things as be rightful.

Probably the important word in the Collect is the adverb —"always."

In the Epistle we have suggested the continuous offering of the Divine help to man in his journey through life.

In the Gospel is depicted the helplessness of the steward dismissed from his trust.

Both teach plainly that we "cannot do anything that is good" without God; and so form a basis for the prayer that we "may be *enabled*" to live according to His Will.

Through both runs the note of warning; the warning of people who, like the Israelites, and like the rich man's steward, *once* thought and did right things.

> "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition."

The lesson which we have to learn is that of steadfastness, continuance, and perseverance.

> "Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do *always* such things as be rightful."

It may be worth while to notice the Latin original of the petition of the Collect.

"Secundum Te," "according to Thee," stands in opposition to "Sine Te," "without Thee."

It implies even more than to act in accordance with the Will of God. It asks that we may live according to God, *i.e.* that we may have that spiritual life of truth and purity and love, which is the very Life of God Himself.

> "The new man is created after God (according to God) in righteousness and true holiness."

The "life" spoken of is the life of man's spirit when quickened by the Holy Spirit.

And this life is "according to God." He is the model, the source, the regulating principle of it.[1]

There may be yet another echo from the lessons of last Sunday.

We thought then of the "never-failing Providence," the

[1] "Meditations on the Collects," Bishop of Vermont.

care of God our Father, which is *always* providing for the needs of His children.

The life of him who lives "according to God" will follow the Divine example:

> "I have set the Lord *always* before my face."
> "I will talk of Thy commandments; my delight shall be in Thy statutes: and I will not forget Thy word."

If God be in the heart, then the thoughts, the words, the deeds, will *always* be God-ward, and so "rightful."

"According to Thy Will," that is, in the way, and by the means, which God appoints.

"That way begins with the means of grace, and it goes on, not only with their constant use, but with the faithful use of the grace of which they are the means."

> "I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea."
> "And were all baptized with Moses in the cloud and in the sea."
> "And did all eat the same spiritual meat."
> "And did all drink the same spiritual drink."
> "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

Mark that *all* are equally baptized, *all* partake of the same spiritual food.

Only as the "Word of God, not being mixed with faith," did not profit, so the means of grace may fail to profit those in whom they are not mixed with faith and penitence and love.

By the power of God the grace is in the means which He has ordained.

He who uses the means must bring a soul prepared, if he is to benefit by the grace which the means convey.

The lesson turns upon the "always." Our works have to be "begun, continued, and ended" in God.

We seek grace in His appointed means that we may be "enabled to *live* according to His Will."

In this way the "temptations" of the Epistle, even "the mammon of unrighteousness" of the Gospel, may be so used as to help on our reception into the "Everlasting habitations."

Notice further that these gifts of grace are among the "goods" of God, of which we are stewards.

Unless we use the gifts of God aright, that is, for God's glory, we shall be found guilty of having "wasted" them.

Our Lord draws a sharp, clearly defined contrast.

On the one side are "the children of this world," with their thoughtfulness, their ready ingenuity, their provision for an anticipated future.

On the other side are "the children of light," with their forgetfulness of their Father "rich in Mercy," of His warnings, and of "the things which belong unto their peace."

What a contrast! What a theme for thought it affords!

Dwell upon God's provision of Love in the Blessed Sacrament for those already united to Himself through the Sacrament of Baptism.

The Blessed Sacrament is the perpetual assurance to us of the ever-living thought of God for His children.

Christ, by the hands of His commissioned priesthood,

perpetuates upon the altars of His Church on earth the all-sufficient Sacrifice of Calvary.

Before the Thought of God pass the cares, the wants, the trials, the aspirations of *all* His people.

Not one is forgotten, not one is unknown, everything about every one of us is known to, and thought of by, God. Can you imagine it?

So many things we consider too insignificant, too unworthy to be put into our prayers; and yet—God sees them all.

Your past—what do you think of it? What has God thought of it?

Your present—God contemplates it, willing its improvement.

Your future—that which you dread to dwell upon; it rests in the loving Thought of God.

Yes, God wishes the present improved, the future prepared for. And so the Thought of God becomes manifest in action.

In the Blessed Sacrament the Sacred Presence is vouchsafed to us. The Divine Victim is in our midst. The Spiritual Rock is with us.

The Holy Eucharist is the assurance of what God still thinks, still is willing to do for His children.

"Give us this day our daily bread."
"My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."
"I am the Bread of Life."

To *live* "according to God," we need the "Bread of Life" which the Father gives.

"Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." There is the secret of the "always" of which we have been thinking.

"Pilgrims here on earth and strangers,
Dwelling in the midst of foes."

We have many a long mile of struggle and discouragement to traverse before we can hope to reach our journey's end.

The old temptations haunt us still; the old infirmities beset us; all grows old except the power of sin and the strength of our earthward desires.

Many a spot there is where the sun of trial shall still parch us; many an arid waste wherein no water shall be found.

But the Love of God has provided us with the pilgrim's Food. The Rock follows us. The Heavenly Manna daily falls.

God thinks, and God works. Man forgets, and man rests in idle wasting of His Master's goods.

Meanwhile time hurries on, and the day of account draws near.

Ah, let us take warning. Some of us may have neglected, may have "tempted Christ" in the past.

In the Presence of Jesus let us say, with all our hearts, with a full purpose, with a full consciousness of the marvels which the Holy Eucharist enshrines—

> "Grant to us, Lord, the spirit to think and do *always* such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good *without Thee*, may *by Thee* be enabled to live according to Thy Will."

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. xii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xix. 41.

The Mercy of God in accepting, and the willingness of God in listening to, the prayers of His servants—that is the primary thought of the Collect of the day.

And it is of the "Common Prayer" of His people that we mainly think: those prayers which we offer in God's own House, at God's own Altar, in union with the all-atoning Sacrifice of God's own Son.

You remember the prayer of Solomon at the Dedication of the Temple—

> "Hearken unto the supplications of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, which they shall make towards this place: hear Thou from Thy dwelling-place, even from heaven: and when Thou hearest, forgive."

In all times of Israel's necessity, in sorrow, in want, in banishment, or in sin—

> "Hear Thou from the heavens, even from Thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplication."
>
> "Now, my God, let, I beseech Thee, Thine Eyes be open, and let Thine Ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place."

And if, in that dedicated House, the Eyes of God were open, and the Ears attentive to the prayers of His humble servants, are they less so now?

We worship in the Temple of the Living God, the place where His Honour dwells.

God's dear Son will be present with us in the Sacrament of the Altar, and He will take our prayers of necessity, of want, yes, of banishment and sin, into His own most gracious Hands.

He will pour them into the Ears willing and waiting to listen, and He will obtain for us the answer of peace, and the satisfaction of our needs.

There is no doubt of God's willingness to listen; there is no doubt of the efficacy of the pleadings of the Lamb of God.

But owing to our imperfection, there *is* doubt as to the character of our petitions. We may ask and receive not, "*because we ask amiss.*"

And so it is that we say, "that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please Thee."

The Epistle and Gospel both seem to tell us what is the character of the worship and the petitions which are pleasing to God.

The Epistle tells us wholly of the spiritual life of the members of the body of Christ. "Ye were Gentiles," earthly, and carried away by the things of earth, but now we live under the law of the Spirit of Life.

The former things are passed away. Henceforth we "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The man of God, the member of Christ, must grow in

spiritual life and graces: wisdom, knowledge, faith, must be the desire of his soul.

Chiefest among his petitions must be those for growth in grace, increase in spiritual knowledge, progress in acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord, through the work of God the Holy Ghost within the soul.

Note how clearly the Apostle teaches the dependence of the Church, both in its corporate capacity and in the individual lives of its members, upon the work of God the Holy Ghost:

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

"There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."

"There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Who worketh all in all."

What a contrast such teaching offers to the ordinary, popular view of Christ's Holy Church.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

The Spirit of God, in Infinite Wisdom, divides to every man severally as He will.

Man receives, and man has to use. His virtues are to be, not the fruits of "natural religion," but "the fruits of the Spirit."

Note next the teaching of the Gospel.

The Son of God comes to His Israel, His chosen people, those who had enjoyed the highest spiritual privileges and opportunities, and He weeps over them.

Why? Because they had forsaken the spiritual and become only of the earth, earthy; because wrapped in the pride of their earthly nationality, they had lost sight of their

spiritual inheritance: because even their worship had grown earthly.

The King comes to the courts of His Father's House, and finds the buyers and sellers in the Temple; and so, when He comes to His own, He not merely weeps, but He punishes for sin.

> "If thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."
>
> "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

True, when we go to the Altar to-morrow we shall have in our hearts many an earthly need, many a worldly trial and sorrow.

We are encouraged to bring them to our Father, Who "knoweth that we have need." His merciful Ears are open to all the prayers of His children.

But we must not let the lower blind us to the higher needs and the more essential petitions; "seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

"Lord, that I may receive my sight," must be our prayer; that I may see my soul as Thou seest it; that I may see the Vision of Holiness in the Presence of my Lord; that I may see the darkness of my own unholiness.

Then shall I "ask such things as shall please Thee."

Conformity to Thy Will in things earthly; growth in grace, and in likeness to the Image of Him Whom I try to worship; a spiritual mind amid earthly surroundings; a true, whole-hearted service—such will be the petitions which my soul will breathe.

And the Father will listen as His child, united with the

Eternal Son, upheld by the Holy Spirit, pours out in broken whisper his petitions.

O God, Who lovest me, inflame my heart with love: that I may pray the prayer Thou delightest to answer; for it is the Voice of Thine own dear Son, which Thou hearest through His members:

Our Father—hallowed be *Thy* Name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done,
for *Thine* is the Kingdom
the Power and the Glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

(i.) Offer to God your gratitude for the indwelling Presence of His Holy Spirit within your soul, and your sorrow for past misuse of His gifts.

(ii.) Pray, "Visit, O Lord, and cleanse my conscience that Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when He cometh to me, may find in me a mansion prepared for Himself."

(iii.) Resolve, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that neither by unspiritual life, nor by indifference, will you wound the Heart of Jesus, your Redeemer.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, Who declarest Thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace, that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. xv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xviii. 9.

There is only one thought on which we can dwell in the services of this Sunday, but it is an all-absorbing thought. It is the thought which alone brings hope, whether we look at the past, the present, or the future.

It is the thought of the MERCY of God.

Sin has so weakened us. In will and resolution, even in the hope of being "made partakers of the heavenly treasure," we are so weak.

And the weakness, as we own, is the consequence of sin, and that sin—our own.

To "run the way" of God's commandments. With knowledge of the past, and consciousness of the present, how impossible it seems.

We dare not expect it; we shrink almost from asking for it in our prayers.

To "creep" in the way; yes, that is about the summit of our hopes.

"Follow;" well, we wish we could, and sometimes we try to, but it is so falteringly, and with such halting steps, and with so many falls—we shall never succeed.

Power manifested in mercy: pity exhibited in the activities of grace. That is the revelation of God.

"I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me." That is the consequence for man.

Power and mercy, pity and grace—how we need them!

And we find all in Him Whom the Son of God Himself has taught us to call "Our Father."

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

"For He knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust."

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

"Now unto Him That is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the *power* that worketh in us."

"By the grace of God I am what I am: . . . yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

"Mercifully grant us such a measure of Thy grace."

"God, Who is rich in mercy." Who but an inspired Apostle could have written such words?

His mercy and His grace, they are alike unlimited; deep as ocean, boundless as eternity.

To that grace we cling, and on that mercy we throw ourselves; for what else can give us hope, or strength, or confidence?

What else is real, what else is sure?

"I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man." But—"with the Lord there is mercy."

Mercy listens, and pity stoops, and to each suppliant distrustful of self, but trusting in mercy only, there is granted that "measure of grace" which the Divine Wisdom knows to be proportioned to our needs.

We do well to consider the variety of God's mercies—

(i.) Different to different persons.
(ii.) No two of the same person's mercies are the same.
(iii.) Varieties, slow and sudden, unasked and long prayed for, direct and indirect, secret and public.[1]

The Epistle and Gospel both breathe the same thought.

St. Paul preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom founded on the mercy of God in Christ.

> "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins."

The mercy of God in sending His Son; the pity of the Son of God in dying for man; that, and naught else, is the Gospel which St. Paul preached, and which we need.

As he writes, he cannot refrain from illustrating the mercy of God by reference to his own experience.

> "He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle. But by the grace of God I am what I am."

As he writes to St. Timothy in another place—

"I obtained mercy," because the Divine pity saw that "I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Saved by the mercy of God, St. Paul "ran the way of

[1] Faber.

God's commandments," obtained the "gracious promises," was "made partaker of the heavenly treasure."

That is the teaching of the Epistle.

Then we turn to the Gospel.

We enter the courts of the Temple; we hear the words of prayer, the self-righteousness, the self-justification of the Pharisee.

Self, and confidence in the power of self, have eaten into the man's soul: the disease has blinded the man's eyes; his very worship is the worship of self.

We turn away sad at heart. Perhaps we feel self-condemned, for do we not hear the echo of so many of our own past prayers?

A murmur reaches our ears. It is the true voice of God-created but fallen humanity, which has been breathed in every age, and by people of every race, since Adam fell.

"God be merciful to me a sinner." The sinner and his God.

The sinner conscious of his sin, because conscious of the Presence of his God.

> "I heard Thy Voice in the garden, and I was afraid."

The sinner conscious of the burden, the guilt, the heinousness of his sin. "Against Thee only have I sinned."

The sinner with one plea, and one plea only, which he can offer to Him Whose law he has broken, and before Whom he stands condemned—Mercy.

> "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

How can we have thought of self, or of self-exaltation, how can we be aught else but humble, as we kneel in the Courts of our Father's House, in the Presence of Incarnate Mercy?

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

"He ever liveth to make intercession."

"Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world."

"Look up unto God, wait awhile till your eyes grow accustomed to the blaze, look up to His highest heights, gaze into his deepest depths—there now, you see mercy. Oh, how unutterably beautiful! And you may read the new name God gave to mercy—and when He gave it the songs of the angels thundered round the throne as they had never done before: 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.'"[1]

And Jesus, our Jesus, is with us in the Blessed Sacrament, "Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven."

When having recited the glories of the Incarnation in the familiar words of the Creed, we bow before the Sacred Presence of our Lord, we have but one prayer to offer—the prayer of the Publican in the Temple:

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

"Mercy, Good Lord, I ask,
This is my humble prayer;
For Mercy, Lord, is all my suit,
O let Thy Mercy spare.

Lord, there is Mercy now,
As ever was with Thee;
Before Thy Throne of Grace I bow;
Be merciful to me."

[1] Faber.

Aspirations before, at, and after Communion—

"Grant me the gift of tears, O sweetest Lord, and let them flow at the remembrance of Thy mercies." [1]

"Jesu, most humble, have mercy upon me."

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever."

[1] "A Year of Eucharists."

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve; Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—2 Cor. iii. 4. *The Gospel.*—St. Mark vii. 31.

The one word which we thought of last week, the word which brings hope and consolation to our souls, the word which has, perhaps, been echoing in your ears daily as you tried to pray, that word meets us again as we approach the Altar to-day—MERCY.

How thankful we ought to be that we are children of the Holy Church, with such thoughts and prayers put into our hearts and lips.

"Almighty and Everlasting God."

Consider the Majesty of Him to Whom in prayer you approach.

"Who art always more ready to hear than we to pray."

We, with all our sins and necessities, so backward to pray; God, in His Eternal Majesty, so ready to listen. The merciful Ears "attent unto the prayer that is made in this place."

"And art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve."

We indeed deserve nothing, and our very desires are so faint and so unworthy that we hardly dare to offer them.

"Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy."

Mercy we asked for last week. Now, led into the contemplation of what God is, and what His mercy means, we ask for an abundant outpouring of that gift.

Why? The next words explain.

Conscience has taught us so much. Conscience has made us afraid.

While we knelt in the Sacred Presence, which is the daily witness of the Divine mercy, conscience has revealed to us—

(*a*) Such blackness of sin and of ingratitude;
(*b*) Such abysses of evil;
(*c*) Such dangers, and such incapacity to meet them, that nothing but an *abundance* of mercy can satisfy our needs.

And so, with no trust in self, but in humble reliance upon the mercy of God, we pray Him to give us—

"Those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of"—the Sacred Victim—"Jesus Christ our Lord."

Dwell for a few moments on that word "conscience." What does it mean?

Conscientia, i.e. knowledge together-with. Together with whom? Knowledge together with the Holy Spirit of God.

It is the Voice of God the Holy Ghost speaking within

the soul of God's child, that tells of the evil done and of the good left undone.

It is the Voice of Eternal Love. It is the ever-present evidence of the Divine watchfulness and care for our souls.

It is the Light from on high, which pierces through the sin-engendered clouds and mists of our lives.

It is the Light which reveals to us, through the rifts, the Face of our Father, and causes us to fear, as we realise His Love and our own vileness and ingratitude:

> "I heard Thy voice . . . and I was afraid; and I hid myself."
>
> "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother; . . . therefore is this distress come upon us."
>
> "And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man."
>
> "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord."
>
> "And after the fire a still small voice."

We never really know sin until we know Love.

We feel its consequences in ourselves, or witness them in others, but sin, in its true guilt and utter hideousness, we never realise until we see Love and Mercy manifested in the Incarnate Son of God.

I must pray for mercy? Yes, indeed you must; but pray above all for light wherewith to see the Love of God.

We shall not even realise our *need* of mercy until we have seen *that*.

The Gospel tells us—

> "They bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech."

Mercy they came to ask for; mercy for a life impaired, with powers deadened, hearing lost, speech affected.

Power to be shown in mercy. Mercy to be manifested in restoration.

Of Christ's pity they seem to have felt sure.

When the conscience is deadened by resistance to its voice, and by persistence in sin, then the soul of man becomes deaf to the pleadings of the Spirit of God.

"Their conscience seared with a hot iron."

"Even their mind and conscience is defiled."

And the witness of the life, its utterance, is hindered; the impediment of sin, allowed and persisted in, has marred it.

But still, not altogether of its own volition, but by the ministry of the Church, the soul is brought before Christ the Healer.

It wants to hear, but even His Voice can hardly reach it. It wants to speak, perhaps to offer excuse or justification, but it cannot form the words.

One cry only can it utter, the cry from which the Divine Pity never turns away—"MERCY."

You are coming to the Holy Eucharist; you, with your conscience.

Child of God, member of Christ, temple of the Holy Ghost, ask yourself, "What is it whereof my conscience is afraid?"

Evil done, good left undone; commandments broken, grace resisted; Sacraments slighted or received in sin—What is there of which I am *not* afraid?

My whole life seems one vast source of fear, and there is but one word I can utter, one plea I dare present—MERCY.

Take your Prayer-Book and see how often that word occurs in the Sacred Liturgy.

"Lord have mercy, and incline our hearts."
"Mercifully accept our oblations."

To that mercy we commend—

"All who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity;" yes, all we love, the living and the dead.

Look at the words of your Confession.

"Father, Maker, Judge, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, against Thy Divine Majesty, have mercy, have mercy, most Merciful Father."

See the words of Absolution.

"Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Who of His great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins . . . have mercy upon you."

Look at the prayer of Humble Access, just before the Sacred Presence is vouchsafed to us.

"We do not presume to come to this Thy table, O Merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. Thou art the same Lord, Whose property is always to have mercy."

And then in the greatest Act of all, our sense of wonder seems to inflame our hearts to the deepest consciousness of the Love of the Eternal Trinity, and we say—

"Almighty God, Who of *Thy Tender Mercy* didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ, Hear us, O Merciful Father."

And even in our hymn of Glory and of Praise, when the Lord hath spoken "Ephphatha" to our souls, and our lips are opened to glorify His Name, still there must come the minor chord, the sinner's cry—

"O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy, have mercy, have mercy upon us."

And the knowledge of God, of His Mercy and His Love

in Jesus our Lord, brings a peace "which passeth all understanding."

In *Preparation*—

"Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness: according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences."

In *Communion*—

"I will betroth thee unto Me . . . in loving kindness and in mercies."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"He hath done all things well." "I will sing aloud of Thy Mercy."

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Almighty and merciful God, of Whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Gal. iii. 16. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke x. 23.

There is the same continuity between this and the preceding Sundays which we have so often previously noticed.

Mercy, that has been our thought for the last two weeks.

"God be merciful to me a sinner," we cried with the Publican last Sunday, and conscience has taught us that we, being sinners indeed, need an "abundance" of that Mercy, on which alone our life depends.

To-day the word is recalled in the commencement of the Collect, but is more strikingly present in the Gospel, in which the "Lord of all power and might" teaches Mercy by the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."

Mercy is first received, then to be practised.

> "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise."

But there is an interweaving of the threads of teaching which we should do well to notice.

Take the Collect and note the repetition of one word in it, which immediately attracts our attention—"service" and "serve."

> "Almighty and *Merciful* God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service."

Man was created by God to fear, and to worship, and to *serve* Him; but man, in his fallen condition, is incapable of offering to God an acceptable service.

The Mercy of God has therefore provided means—gifts, gifts of grace, communicated by the power of the Spirit through the Sacraments, whereby man is once more able to walk with God, and to render to Him a "true and laudable service," *i.e.* to fulfil the original purpose of this creation.

Mercy, mark you, provides and offers the gifts; the Love of God meets the needs of man.

It was not man who sought, but God who offered the free gifts of His Love:

> "God so loved the world that He *gave* His only-begotten Son."

God knew, and man has discovered, that in His service alone can happiness be found; all other service—the service of the world, the service of self, the service of a man's own desire—is but utter bondage.

God's service alone, being that for which he was created, is man's true freedom.

And so in the Collect we pray—as for one of the greatest blessings we can desire—

> "Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises."

The Epistle is full of that same word "promises," and one promise there is which, in this connection, we cannot fail to recall.

It is a promise of the hereafter, of the time when "this life" shall be over, and the faithful service *here* shall be over.

What is the promised reward? It is the perfect joy of perfect service. "His servants shall serve Him."

The words are the everlasting echo of the promise of the Psalms:

> "Mine eyes look upon such as are faithful in the land: that they may dwell with Me."
>
> "Whoso leadeth a godly life: he shall be My servant."

Yes, but what is the service of God? What are its characteristics, its evidences, its tokens?

Here comes in the great object-lesson of the Gospel.

"One is your Master, even Christ." He is at once the Teacher and the Example.

"I am among you as He that serveth." In His Life we have the pattern of the perfect service; the service perfect both towards God His Father, and towards men, His brethren.

It is a twofold service, and yet but one service; for in serving men He was serving, doing the will of, God His Father, and accomplishing His work.

By the Life of active Mercy He was ever revealing to men, robbed, wounded and dying, helpless and hopeless, "the kindness and love of God our Saviour."

While the world shall last, shall ever the story of the Good Samaritan be forgotten?

The man *going down* from Jerusalem to Jericho—falling among thieves, who strip him, wound him, leave him half dead, to perish by the road-side.

What a picture it is of mankind whom the pity (φιλανθρωπία) of God our Saviour came to save!

Going down, from Jerusalem, the City of God, to Jericho, the type of sin.

Jericho, you will remember, was to be utterly destroyed, and a solemn curse was pronounced on those who should rebuild it: a curse fulfilled in later times (Josh. vi. 26, and 1 Kings xvi. 34).

True, it subsequently became known as "The City of Palms," but its ancient name remained, even in spite of its environment.

"May we not interpret it, that *sin* is ever the same, even though it surround itself with that which makes it pleasant to the senses, and seeks to hide, under a fair appearance, its inherent hideousness?"

Man was made by the Mercy of God a member of the Heavenly City. Member of Christ and child of God, he is an inheritor of his true home, Jerusalem.

But alas! he *goes down*, forgets his birthright, forgets his dignity as a child of God, enters the broad road and "goes down" in the path of sin.

The younger son gathered all together and "took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

You know how that parable goes on; how clearly the *downward* progress of sin is depicted in the case of him who left his home and his father's love, till he reached that stage where "no man gave unto him" and only a father's love remembered.

"Stripped him of his raiment and wounded him."

Stripped of the garment of peace, with which in his Baptism he had been clothed—stripped of his innocence and self-respect—wounded in the power and faculties of his being—the man lies, helpless, hopeless, in the pathway of life.

Will none help him? The world looks on and sneers: the formalist, even the man in authority in the Church, "pass by" on the other side.

What is it to them? Only a life ruined; a common sight, and the man's own fault after all; it is only *just* he should suffer.

Of course we feel for him, they say, but we have others to attend to, more deserving, or more interesting. Enough if by our actions we show our condemnation, if we point the moral, and—pass on.

Poor wounded souls! poor dying souls!

Where would the souls of sinners be if there were only man to "look on" them, to condemn them, and forsake them?

"*But*" (how thankful we should be for this "but"!), "*But* a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him."

That is the Saviour man wants; that is the Saviour *we* need:

"And when he saw him, he had compassion on him."

Oh, loving Eyes, which never yet turned away from any sinner, however loathsome his condition, however terrible his wounds!

Stripped, wounded, dying, the sufferer is man still, and to him the Son of Man, bound by the cords of love and brotherhood, stoops in mercy and compassion.

No questions asked, no reproaches uttered, no conditions made, before help can be given. Just pure, boundless Love.

With His own Hand—were ever hands so tender?—He binds up the wounds, pours in the oil and wine of His Grace.

He knows the quantities in which to blend them—how much of the oil of soothing, how much of the wine of cleansing are needed.

"And set him on his own beast." Who shall tell what words were uttered as the Samaritan raised in his own arms the man too enfeebled to stand alone?

Who shall tell of the words of encouragement whispered, the hopes suggested, the promises offered?

And was there no feeble response? Was there no murmur of gratitude, no whisper of surprise at such pity and condescension?

Surely there must have been *some* response, however feeble.

Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The Good Samaritan still comes in the Sacraments to the place where we, poor sinners, lie—stripped—wounded—half dead—with the pain of our struggles and our defeats.

> "We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we most grievously have committed."

And One comes by with Wounded Side, and has compassion upon us; pardons and delivers us from all our sins, confirms and strengthens us in our utter weakness, is willing to bring us to everlasting life.

How can we best show gratitude to Him?

"Freely ye have received, freely give."

"Go, and do thou likewise."

As thou hast received mercy, so must thou show mercy.

Before you go to the throne of Mercy to-morrow, be sure that your heart is full of mercy to the faults, the imperfections, the aggravations of those around you.

True, they may have wronged you, wounded you, sinned against you; but "be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Remember, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Therefore, be sure ere you receive that Gift of Divine Mercy to-morrow, that you, who receive so much, are ready to show to all that same quality of *Mercy*.

In *Preparation*—

"O look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me; as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name."

In *Communion*—

"Jesus Himself drew near."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Behold, O Lord, how that I am Thy servant."

"I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant."

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Gal. v. 16. *The Gospel.*—Luke xvii. 11.

> "Grant that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises."

That was our prayer last week, and you will remember how full the Epistle was of that word "promises."

To-day we take up the same word and weave it into our Collect, praying for that which shall make it possible for us not to fail, but to obtain the treasures of God's Love.

"That we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us"—"to obey Thee," "to keep Thy commandments," would perhaps be the form which our own request would take.

The Church goes much farther than that. Not merely "make us to *do* that which Thou commandest," but "make us to *love* that which Thou dost command."

The standard is a high one, but it is the standard of our Head, Jesus Christ.

"That the world may know that I love the Father;

and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do."

"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love."

Love is the principle of obedience. We can do anything and everything for those we love, even bend our wills in obedience to their wishes.

But this expression of the Collect goes beyond that, goes to the highest point of all, even to *loving* the thing which is commanded.

If it should be a contradiction of our will, to love the thing which contradicts, because of Him who orders it.

If it be a Cross which we are bidden to carry, to love that Cross, because of the Pierced Hand which presents it to us.

To give a loving welcome to all that comes, because it comes from the Love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Yes, it *is* a high standard, and far, far ahead of our present attainment.

Indeed we want to cry for mercy, because of our ordinary low standard, and the semi-fatalism with which we accept, because we feel things to be inevitable.

Indeed we want to own ourselves sinners, because our efforts and desires are so faulty, and our very best is so bad.

Still there is the standard, and we have got to do better things, and to try, at all events, to reach it.

But how? By more effort? By more fervent desire? Yes, all that, but something much more:

"Our sufficiency is of God."

And so to God, the Almighty and Everlasting, we pray, "Give us those graces by which alone we can attain to that

which now seems impossible." "Give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity."

The Church is always making us pray for *more*. "Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy." "Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy." "Give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity."

If you look at the Epistle you will see how closely it is connected with the thoughts suggested by the Collect.

We want to obtain the promises, and we want to give a loving obedience.

Yes, but "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." There is the root of the trouble.

The flesh, with all its catalogue of evil thoughts and evil deeds, seeks to enthral us, hinders us, appears to us well-nigh invincible. It would be invincible were it not that "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son," and that "it is the Spirit which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." "The *fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, faith," and from faith springs hope.

Therefore it is to the gift of God that we look, even to the Holy Spirit, which Christ our King sends to us from the Father.

It is from Him there comes the power to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

From Him comes the love which binds us to the Cross of Crucifixion.

From Him comes the hope whereby we look forward to the Crown which shall hereafter replace the Cross.

The Gospel contains the story of the cleansing of the ten

lepers, which forms a perfect illustration of the prayer of the Collect.

Christ is passing to Jerusalem through the midst of Samaria and Galilee—through the world which lies under the curse of sin and separation, towards the Jerusalem which is on high.

He meets with the world-taint, the sin of which leprosy is the type.

"They stood afar off"—true picture of the alienation of which sin is the cause; but yet they have sufficient faith to cry "Master, have mercy."

And He Who never turns away from the appeal of faith, however feeble, gives them a command which shall at once awaken hope, develop faith, and prove obedience. "Go, shew yourselves unto the priests."

It was a demand upon their faith, for only those healed were bound to show themselves to the priests and from them to obtain the assurance of healing.

They were sent to use, for its prescribed purpose, the ordinance of God. And in the act of their obedience to Christ's command they obtained that which Christ promised.

Surely faith and hope must have increased as they fulfilled the command of Him to Whom they had appealed; and love—was not that kindled when they found themselves healed?

Alas! we know the sequel. We remember the words which reveal so much of the longing desire of Him Whose Love had responded so readily to the cry of their misery, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

Only one grateful; only one in whom love had been awakened—a love sufficient to take him back to the Feet of his Healer.

But to that one who had added love to faith came the gracious words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

We kneel before the same gracious Master, Whose Love and gifts of healing are inexhaustible and unchanged.

To Him we poor sinners, tied and bound with the chain of our sins, lift still the leper's cry, "Master, have mercy on us."

"Our faith is dim, our hope is faint, and our love is cold; give us the increase we so greatly need."

Obedience to His word is the first necessity; cleansing in obedience to His prescribed order follows; and then to the obedient soul comes with the perfect cleansing the increase which we so greatly need.

But we shrink; we know the command, and yet we fear; we have not the will to obey. The shame is so great, the trouble so burdensome.

Oh, pour out Thy Spirit into our hearts that we may not only do, but even love to do, that which thou commandest; for in so doing we shall learn to love Thee Who, we find, "givest more than either we desire or deserve."

We will fall at Thy feet, dear Lord, giving Thee thanks, in the Eucharist to-morrow; and there, with faith, hope, and love increased by the consciousness of Thy gifts to ourselves, we may hope to hear Thy gracious voice, "Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

In *Preparation*—

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Ask for grace even to love that which God commands—the crucifixion of self.

In *Communion*—

"Behold Christ within thy heart, moved with compassion for thy sin-sick soul, and healing it by His gracious Presence: do thou fall down at His Feet giving Him thanks and glorifying God."[1]

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Praise the Lord, O my soul: and forget not all His benefits."

"Who forgiveth all thy sin; and healeth all thine infirmities."

[1] "A Year of Eucharists."

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy: and, because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Gal. vi. 11. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. vi. 24.

How the same thoughts and the same contrasts are brought before us, week after week.

The thoughts, though old, are yet ever new in their application, varying, as it does, according to the experiences of our lives.

The contrasts are ever imprinting themselves with new force as we learn more of God and of ourselves.

We come back to God week by week; we mean never to leave Him, ever to keep His Presence within our souls. Alas! we know what so often has happened.

The cares of life, the anxieties, the lawful business—to say nothing of the amusements—crowd out our recollection of the higher life, and of Him Who is the centre of that life.

Quiet preparation for our great act of worship, and for our Communion, comes in to help us so greatly.

The Church, as the Collect reminds us, is the Lord's; we are members of the Church, and she teaches us to join, week by week, in the Sacrifice of the Altar, and reminds us of the need of careful preparation before we approach.

In the Courts of the Lord's House we get back close to God; we leave the world without; we lay bare our hearts before Him; our souls rest on God and on the promise of His "perpetual mercy."

"Mercy" and "strength"—old and familiar thoughts indeed, reminding us of past prayers and present wants.

The week's record is one—is it not?—of leaving undone what you knew you ought to have done, and of doing, again and again, what you knew you ought not to have done.

Your failure has been constant, you say; you have sinned in thought, word, and deed.

Your need is of mercy. "Forgive," we say, and yet we sin again.

We should well-nigh despair were it not for this:

> "With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

"Perpetual mercy," the Collect calls it.

"The frailty of man"—how well we know it. It is exactly the word which describes our condition.

Infirm of purpose, wanting in strength, deficient in fibre—how true it all is!

We break our resolutions, and we break down in perseverance so quickly, so readily; we are so wanting in moral courage, in the determination to do what we know to be right. It seems so hard to stand upright.

The mercy of God is shown in the communication of strength:

"Keep Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy."
"Keep us ever by Thy help."

Both the mercy and the strength, the goodness and the help, are found in the Blessed Sacrament.

"The Body which was given for thee"—the perpetual witness of mercy; "preserve thy body"—the assurance of strength.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The mercy and the strength are manifested—

(i.) In guardianship:
"Keep us from all things hurtful;"
(ii.) In guidance:
"Lead us to all things profitable."

The same words, I think, form the conclusion of both clauses; "hurtful to," "profitable to"—"our salvation."

"Hurtful" and "profitable"—how little we know what is *really* hurtful, what *really* profitable to us.

How often we mistake the two; we find too late that what we avoided would have been full of profit, while what we sought so eagerly has proved full of harm to us.

And when we speak of things in reference to "our salvation," how ignorant, how short-sighted, we feel ourselves to be.

Epistle and Gospel fit in so aptly to teach us the truths we need.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

"If any man will come after Me, let him take up his Cross, and follow Me."

Strange, is it not? We shrink from crosses; St. Paul gloried in them.

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

The world is hurtful, and through union with Christ St. Paul was crucified to the world.

We fly to the world, and through fellowship with it, "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

The Cross to us seems hard and barren; to St. Paul it was fruitful, profitable to salvation.

"Faithful Cross, above all other
One and only noble Tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be."

"Nor any tree in the Garden of God was like unto Him in His beauty."

"My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Even Christ "learned obedience by the things which He suffered;" and "the disciple is not greater than his Lord."

If we would be kept from "things hurtful," it must be by the Cross being stamped on the life, the lips, the whole being; thereby we are crucified to the world, its temptations, and its snares.

If we would attain to eternal salvation, it must be through the Cross, whereby we mount to union with the Crucified, and bear fruit to His glory.

The Gospel continues the teaching, and unveils the full blessedness of our position.

The world, Mammon, the eating and drinking, the things present and visible—they, unless viewed rightly, are hurtful to our salvation.

But all are in the Hands of God, and herein is the full blessedness: God is your Father, and "your Father knoweth that ye have need."

Yes, He knoweth that we have need of the things of earth for our nourishment, our sustenance, our innocent enjoyment.

Accepted from Him, enjoyed in Him, they cease to be hurtful, and become profitable.

Seek Him first, seek Him in all, and "all things work together for good to them that love God."

But the teaching goes beyond that.

Your Heavenly Father looks upon you, not as the child of time and of the world, but as the child of Eternity, an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven.

He knoweth all your need in the highest sense—both what is hurtful to your salvation, and what would be profitable to it.

His Hand holds the Cross, and He bestows it upon you in preparation for, and in accordance with, what *He* sees to be your need.

O Heavenly Father, I know nothing: I cannot see my way; the forms I meet terrify me; the things near me fascinate me.

In Mercy, pity; in Power, uphold; in Knowledge, give me that which Thou seest and knowest to be best for my eternal safety in Thy Kingdom.

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit." Keep from me that which Thou, and Thou only, knowest to be hurtful; give me that which Thou, and Thou only, knowest to be profitable to my salvation.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me.
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"

Lay your life and all your wants, as far as you know them, before the Altar-Throne of Jesus.

Keep nothing back. Offer to Him your frailty, and He will give back strength.

Offer to Him your ignorance, and He will give back guidance.

Offer to Him your failures, and He will give you the grace of perseverance.

As your Father gives you the Food from Heaven, He will, with, and in, that Food, give you *all* which His knowledge tells Him that you need.

He will give you, through that Communion, guardianship from things hurtful.

He will give you, through that Companionship, guidance to all things profitable to your salvation.

"O most sweet Memorial of His death and woe,
Living Bread which givest life to man below,
Let my spirit ever eat of Thee and live,
And the blest fruition of Thy sweetness give.

Jesu, Whom thus veiléd I must see below,
When shalt that be given which I long for so?
That at last beholding Thy uncovered Face,
Thou wouldst satisfy me with Thy fullest grace."

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle. — Eph. iii. 13. *The Gospel.* — St. Luke vii. 11.

Mercy and pity are such a constant theme in the prayers of the Divine Liturgy; constant because so unceasingly needed by the children of the Church who use it.

Last Sunday we asked God to keep His Church with "perpetual mercy"; to-day we ask Him to let His "continual pity cleanse and defend" that same Church of which He has made us members.

We think perhaps most to-day of the Church in its corporate capacity, and "because it cannot continue in safety without His succour," we ask Him to "preserve it evermore by His help and goodness."

The life of the Church in the world is, like the life of her members, exposed to special trials, temptations, dangers.

At one time it is lukewarmness, at another pride and arrogance; at one time encroachment on the part of the State, at another apathy on the part of her rulers; at one time the self-assertion, at another the unfaithfulness, of "parties" within her fold.

"Cleanse," we say—and oh, how we need to be cleansed from party spirit within the Church!

> "When all are for the party,
> And none are for the Church."

How much there is, alas, of envy, emulation, strife, between rival congregations, rival parties in the same congregation.

Jealousies and envyings exist where all should be of one mind and of one spirit, united in devotion to the One Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

And the internal divisions are so manifestly the opportunity of the enemy at the gates that we do well to add, "defend," "preserve by Thy help and goodness."

Strength and cleansing—they both seem to form a part of the Epistle.

> "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth" (the Church militant and the Church at rest) "is named, that He would grant you according to the riches of His Glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

The strength of the members is the strength of the body; if the members of the Church exhibit a weakened spiritual condition, it is the Church which suffers.

The riches of God's grace are poured out for the strengthening of the inner life of His people.

But before we can "comprehend with all saints what is the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," and can be "filled with all the fulness of God," there must be cleansing.

There is so much which preoccupies our souls, which hinders their being filled with the fulness of God.

Self-love, love of the world, love of pleasure, love of ease, all choke the soul and occupy the throne on which the Son of God alone should reign.

"Cleanse and preserve" must be our prayer for the members as for the Church herself; that preserved from temptation and danger, cleansed from the defilements of sin and the world, we may "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

What marvellous words! The Apostle falters when he uses them; he cannot dare to say that even he, who had been cleansed and preserved by the boundless mercy of Christ, could know with a perfect knowledge the love of His Master; "which passeth knowledge," he is compelled to add.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"—it is a continuation of the thought "which passeth knowledge"—"according to the power which worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church throughout all ages."

From the Church, cleansed and defended by the continual pity of its Lord, preserved by His help and goodness, is to rise the strain of Glory throughout all ages:

> "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready."

The Gospel, you will find, illustrates the "continual pity" of the Collect, in its application to the Church and her members.

Jesus, passing through the city of Nain, meets a funeral

procession, a widow following to the grave the bier which bears her only son.

"And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion." He takes her sorrow into His own Sacred Heart and makes it His own sorrow.

His pity manifests itself in the exercise of power; His Voice commands and the dead is raised to life: the mother receives back her son preserved from the corruption of the grave; and "all the people glorified God."

All trial, all sorrow, all bereavement penetrates to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, known to Him not merely in its outward manifestation, but in its source.

On all He has pity, and all He wills to relieve with a sympathy and a power which alike are infinite.

Take the widow of Nain as a picture of the Church, widowed by the absence of her heavenly Bridegroom, grieving over the death in sin of her children, each of whom is dear to her as an only son.

Sin destroys the life of the Spirit within the soul, separates the soul from its union with Him Who is its life, and the mother follows her dear son with tears and sighing, grieving for the lost promise of a fair life.

Ah, how many dead children of the Church there are around and among us!

How little we, comfortable, ordinary, easy-going Church people, recognise the fact of their presence. We do so when the loss is forced home upon us, when the one on whom we built such hopes "goes wrong," as we are wont to say.

But what of the thousands around us, baptized into the

Body of Christ as children, and then allowed to grow up uncared for, untended, swamped in the vice and misery of the world in which they live.

They *are* Christ's. *He* pities; He yearns for their lives to be once more brought into union with His own.

And the Church, as represented by most congregations and members? Well, they like their cushioned seats, or their music, or their elaborate ritual, but in the souls carried out to their burial they have little interest and show less concern.

Is their case hopeless? Is there no power which can restore? Is there none whose pity is strong to save?

The widow's son was past all earthly aid; pity there was, for "much people of the city" followed him to the grave, but there was no power to bring back the spirit which had fled.

But the Love of Christ "which passeth knowledge" was there, pierced with a Divine sorrow, and He Who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think" had visited His people.

Hopelessness vanishes, tears are wiped away in His Presence, and at His word the dead *can* live; the dead son *is* "delivered to his mother"; the "help and goodness" of God have triumphed gloriously.

Can it be so still? Surely, weak as is our faith, faltering as is our hope, He Who did restore to life can give back life, even now, to souls dead in trespasses and sins.

There *are* resurrections through the power of Christ in the Sacraments of His Church.

Souls that were wrecked have been restored; souls that were steeped in sin have been cleansed through the

Precious Blood; souls, whose weakness seemed to render them incapable of recovery, have been preserved by the help and goodness of the Lord of the Church.

It is for us to pray, "Let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend" the souls which Thou camest to save, and for which Thou wast content to die. Thy love is infinite and embraces all.

Here at Thine Altar, conscious of the Divine pity with which Thou regardest *all* sinners, we plead Thy Merits, Thy Sacrifice, for all, before Thy Father's Throne.

"With the Lord there is mercy: and with Him is plenteous redemption."

"And He *shall* redeem Israel: from all his sins."

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. iv. i. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xiv. 1.

The Collect is a prayer for the preventing (or anticipating), and the following, grace of God; that it may be in us a source of devotion to all good works.

There are three illustrations, in the Epistle and Gospel for the day, of people needing this preventing and following grace of God.

1. St. Paul, "the prisoner of the Lord," writing from his imprisonment in Rome.
2. The man "which had the dropsy."
3. The lawyers and Pharisees in the house where Jesus went "to eat bread on the Sabbath day."

It is not difficult to see which of these three bondages requires the most grace for its unloosing.

1. We remember how, in his imprisonment, the grace of God prevented and followed St. Paul.

Brought into captivity unto Christ and imprisoned for

the sake of his Master, he is "continually given to all good works."

In prison at Philippi he sings praises to God, and becomes the instrument of the conversion of the keeper of the prison and his household, admitting them through the "One Baptism" into the "One Faith."

In prison he writes, with unceasing industry, letters to the Churches which he has founded. In prison his bonds in Christ were manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

God's grace in him indeed worked mightily, for the support of his own soul and the edification of his brethren in the faith.

2. The bondage of the poor sufferer was quickly relieved. "He took him and healed him, and let him go." It was the act, as it is the type, of the grace of God, healing men and setting them free.

3. Far more serious is the bondage of those in whose presence the Lord wrought the miracle, for theirs was the bondage of prejudice and pride. "They are truly, as 'the ass or the ox,' incarnations of obstinacy and dulness, 'fallen into a pit,' which is almost hopeless, and from which only the grace of God can pull them out."[1]

In all three cases we perceive the working of this wonderful "preventing," "anticipating" grace of God.

1. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the Church of Christ, but Christ had known him, chosen him as a "vessel, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," and in due time called him.

[1] Dr. Doane, "Mosaics."

Through the whole of his after history, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, there runs the record of the following grace of God. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "By the grace of God I am what I am."

2. The poor man sick of the dropsy had been known of Christ, and was called by Him, by influences unrevealed to us, into His Presence, that he might be healed.

Chance, do you say it was, which caused him to come into that Presence on that Sabbath day?

No, not so. It was the purpose of God, anticipating, going before, a perfect faith, and drawing the man through suffering to the sole source of healing.

3. The lawyers and Pharisees, who had come to watch, can only hold their peace in Christ's Presence as He questions them; but He reads the silence of their souls, and His love yearns for their cure.

He tries to break up the hard ground of their hearts, to warn them of the sin of prejudice and pride, and calls them to that humility whereby alone they can enter into His Kingdom, and be exalted into union with Himself.

The Epistle seems to give evidence of the same thought. He who had been called by preventing grace reminds others of their call.

"The vocation wherewith ye are called." "Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."

For each and for all, at every time, there is grace sufficient; and this grace springs from Him Who "went about doing good," "continually given to all good works."

He is "before all things," and by His grace we were called and admitted into our vocation as children of God.

In the fulfilment of the duties of that vocation difficulties there must be, and that we may "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called," it is upon His grace we must rely.

There is "One Body," and into that Body, Christ's Holy Catholic Church, we have been admitted by the "One Baptism," Christ's own appointed means for the admission of those He calls into fellowship with Himself.

Of that Church there is "One Lord," and in that Church there is the "One Faith" which she teaches to the members of her Lord, and which they are bound to maintain.

There is "One Spirit" whereof we have all been made partakers, and Whose presence is the light and life of the "One Body."

What a picture it is of the "preventing" goodness, the "preventing" grace of God, and how all is summed up in the final words of the Epistle, "One God and *Father* of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

He—because He is the Father of us all—He anticipates, He calls, He provides, He follows. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need."

Yes, so often we want to be brought back to principles, to the foundations of our position.

It is not by chance that we find ourselves where we are, as members of Christ's Holy Catholic Church; it is He Who has called us.

It is not by chance that we happen to be communicants, or happen to think we ought to receive the Blessed Sacrament to-morrow; it is He Who calls us.

Vocation—to whatever we are called—is an intensely solemn responsibility.

Men and women do not sufficiently value the dignity of their vocation into the Body of Christ—One Body, One Spirit, One Lord, One Faith, One God and Father.

Into that wondrous Unity you have been, not dropped haphazard, but *called* by the preventing grace of God:

> "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

But two things strike us:—

1. The character of Him who calls;
2. The difficulties of the vocation.

1. He Who calls is characterised by:—

(*a*) humility,
(*b*) meekness,
(*c*) long-suffering,
(*d*) forbearing love,
(*e*) the spirit of peace.

I need not, I think, give illustrations—the humility of His birth, the meekness of His life, His long-suffering with His enemies, His forbearing love with His disciples, the spirit of peace which breathed through His words and actions—they are familiar topics to you.

Are not these the characteristics of Him Who calls us, as members of the One Body, to the following of Himself? Are not these the fruits which He, our Head, looks for in us, His brethren?

2. Yes, but here come in precisely the difficulties of our vocation. Those very qualities which we have noted are the very ones which we find so difficult to acquire.

But even as we state the difficulty we find its solution.

They are fruits, but they are "*fruits of the Spirit*," whereof we have been made partakers.

We are His brethren, His members, and so long as we are in the Unity of the One Body, that Holy Spirit flows to us from Him the Head, and energising within us, strengthening the weakness of our endeavours, works in us a likeness to Him.

There must be humility in us, humble reliance upon grace, upon the means which our Father has provided.

Our Master bids us "eat bread on the Sabbath day," and as we draw near to His Presence we "watch" Him, to behold the wonders of His Being and of His Love.

"One Lord," the One Faith tells us is present there, but each faithful watcher finds in Him the grace, the virtue, of which his own preparation has told him he stands in need.

We humble ourselves before the Majesty of such condescending knowledge and love.

"Go and sit down in the lowest room." We deserve no higher, for we have shown so little gratitude for grace given, for the vocation wherewith we have been called, so little appreciation of the dignity of our position as members of the One Body, so little response to the movements of the One Spirit.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Think what it means to be exalted into union with the Son of God Who communicates Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

How the thought should deepen the humility with which we approach.

And then at last, some day, when the season of our earthly approach is closed, He may say unto thee, "Friend, go up higher."

"The friend of the Bridegroom rejoiceth greatly, because of the Bridegroom's Voice."

"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

Pray—

(i.) For faithfulness to the "One Faith";

(ii.) For grace to correspond to your vocation, be it what it may, in all lowliness;

(iii.) For grace to "watch" the Footsteps of your Lord, and to persevere in following Him.

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. i. 4. *The Gospel.*—St. Matthew, xxii. 34.

The Church is constantly reminding us of the relationship in which we stand to Almighty God.

We are His covenant people, admitted into the closest union with Him through Holy Baptism.

One clause of the covenant then made, on our part, was that we should "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomp and glory of the world, and all covetous desires of the flesh," so that we would not "follow nor be led by them."

It does not follow, because we renounce them, that therefore the world, the flesh, and the devil should renounce us.

Rather are we led to believe that the powers of evil are specially directed against God's covenant people, desirous of proving true to their covenant.

Hence the petition of the Collect:

> "Give Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil."

The direct purpose of the enemy of our souls and his allies is that we should "follow and be led by them."

Perhaps the two words "follow" and "led" point to different characteristics in the tempted.

Some, with light, fickle, unoccupied minds, "follow" easily the attractions presented to them.

Others, of firmer fibre and more self-command, require to be "led," gradually and insidiously, before the temptation succeeds.

The child of God must have a definite object, and a heart kept constantly free from the infection of evil:

> "Grant Thy people grace with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God."

Intent on following God manifest in Christ, the servant of God will be preserved from following the attractions of evil, and will at the same time preserve, with utmost care, purity of heart and mind.

If the vision be obscured we lose sight of the Figure of our Guide.

> "I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

The "positiveness of the Divine Life" is an important principle. The way to overcome the temptations which beset us is to "follow God."

The Epistle and Gospel seem to impress this lesson in a varied form.

In following Christ we are following God; for "such as the Father is, such is the Son."

The teaching of our Lord Himself, in the Gospel, enforces this truth.

"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?"

"If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?"

And we note the extreme emphasis placed by St. Paul, in the Epistle, on the dignity ascribed to the Only-begotten Son:

"The grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."

"Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"That ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The grace for which the Collect prays, grace to withstand and grace to follow, is given by Jesus Christ.

"The grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."

And by His power we are to be "enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge;" "so that ye come behind in no gift."

The pure heart and mind are the consequence of His work:

"That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

With what truth St. Paul could say—

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord."

Again, the Gospel, in our Lord's own words, gives us the explanation of what is meant by "to follow Thee."

In answer to the lawyer's question "tempting Him," Christ replies—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

"This is the first and great commandment."

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is the old law reiterated and made new by the Son of God.

This law He not merely enunciates, but—

(i.) In His own Life teaches us to obey.

(ii.) By the grace which flows from His Incarnate Life, enables us to obey.

The whole life of Jesus is the fulfilment of the dual law.

That life may be summed up in two sentences—

(*a*) "I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do."

(*b*) "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you."

"Love is the fulfilling of the Law."

To love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and to love our neighbour as ourself, is to "follow God," walking in the Steps and in the strength of His Divine Son.

But the dual law is not one easy to obey.

(i.) We are surrounded and importuned by temptations to love things out of, and other than, God.
The world and self are so close to us, and Satan uses our surroundings to draw us away from God.

(ii.) Our neighbour is not always lovable, often irritating, sometimes hostile.

We have to rely upon "the grace of God which is given by Jesus Christ," and in humble reliance to use that grace.

(*a*) To aid us in self-examination, that we may maintain "pure hearts and minds."

(*b*) To enable us to "withstand the temptations" which on all sides beset us.

Possibly one of the chief temptations of the day is to "question" the authority of Christ, the love of Christ, the Divine foundation of His Church, the truth of the One Faith.

The faith shaken, the life becomes an easy prey.

We turn aside from the world to quiet Communion with the Son of God.

We are coming to Him in the Holy Eucharist; drawing near with faith in His Presence, we seek, by grace, to purify our hearts.

> "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as He is pure."
>
> "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit with unfeigned love of the brethren."

He Who comes to us knows both our temptations, our needs, and our desires.

He is able to "enrich" us in everything, so that we may "come behind in no gift."

The Son of God is there; the Example is there; the grace to follow is there. Having Him, we have all things.

Three thoughts from St. Thomas à Kempis:—

(i.) "I offer unto Thee, O Lord, all my sins and offences, which I have committed before Thee, upon Thy merciful Altar, that Thou mayest consume and burn them all with the fire of Thy love . . . and restore to me again Thy

grace which I lost by sin, forgiving me all my offences, and receiving me mercifully to the kiss of peace."

(ii.) "Then will He say unto me, 'If thou art willing to be with Me, I am willing to be with Thee.'"

"And I will answer Him, 'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, for I will gladly be with Thee.'"

"'This is my whole desire, that my heart be united unto Thee.'"

(iii.) "He that desireth to keep the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace given, and patient for the taking away thereof: let him pray that it may return: let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it."

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. iv. 17. *The Gospel.*—St. Matthew ix. 1.

"Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

Man was created by God "both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

And the Holy Ghost was breathed into man as "the Breath of Life," that man might be enabled to "please God" by conformity to His moral likeness.

Man's being, inspired by the Holy Spirit, would, indeed, be such as the God of Holiness could delight in.

Man, by transgression, fell, and lost the abiding Presence of God the Holy Ghost.

The gift was restored through Christ, and man, redeemed but conscious of frailty, has become the dwelling-place, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, "conscious of frailty," for the greatness of the gift will ever keep the recipient conscious of his own incapacity.

"Without Thee we are not able to please Thee."

The same thought has been present on previous Sundays, especially the first and ninth Sundays after Trinity.

We need the active indwelling of God the Holy Ghost.

Inasmuch as "out of the heart" of man proceeds the evil which defiles his life, we pray:

> "Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our *hearts*."

The appeal is to the Mercy of God, as though we were fully aware of our own past self-willed rebellion against the Holy Spirit's rule.

Note how we are taught to rely entirely upon—

(*a*) The willingness,
(*b*) The power,

of God the Holy Ghost.

> "May *in all things* direct and rule our hearts."

He is willing to guide our lives and is able to rule even our unruly hearts, *in all things*.

And yet, how seldom we seek His direction!

> "The Lord direct your hearts into the Love of God."
>
> "I will dwell in them and walk in them."

The Holy Spirit "underlies, so to speak, all our faculties; He communicates to us no mere negative cleansing, but a positive holiness."

"He illuminates our understanding, purifies and elevates our affections, controls and strengthens our will."[1]

And the "directing" of our lives is by the gentle, silent inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

> "*Incline* our hearts to keep this law."

There must be a purity of heart, a responsive willingness

[1] Bishop of Vermont.

on our side, if the inspirations of the Spirit are to become efficacious.

"Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspirations of Thy Holy Spirit."

If we invite the rule of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, how careful must be our obedience to His warnings, checks, inspirations.

(i.) "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost."
(ii.) "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."
(iii.) "Quench not the Spirit."

Note the order of the verses. By resistance we grieve; by continuance in resistance we run the awful risk of quenching the light of the Holy Spirit within our souls.

The Epistle shows plainly the state of man both without, and with, the indwelling Presence of God the Holy Ghost.

There is the state of those who, following the rule of their own sinful hearts, have "given themselves over" to the dominion of sin.

There is the state of those who, through the power of the Spirit, have "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The rule of the Spirit within the soul is manifested in the fruits of the life:

(i.) "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."
(ii.) The curbing of temper.
(iii.) Honest work accompanied by generosity.
(iv.) Purity of conversation.
(v.) Kindness and tenderness of heart, exhibited in forgiveness of injuries.

These are to be the fruits of the indwelling Presence;

by neglect we should "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The last words of the Epistle, giving the motive of our forgiveness of others, form a link with the teaching of the Gospel:

"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The Gospel tells us of the forgiveness first, then of the restoration, of the man sick of the palsy.

The man was helpless, incapacitated and weighed down with the consciousness of his incapacity.

Our Lord's first words to him are evidence of this consciousness:

"Son, be of good cheer."

The burden was something beyond that of bodily sickness and pain.

Sin was at the root of his helplessness. And He Who could discern the cause of suffering could discern also the faith of the sufferer.

"Thy sins be forgiven thee."

The Jews at once saw that Christ was claiming a Divine prerogative:

"This Man blasphemeth."

Our Lord's reply must be noticed:

"Which is easiest, to claim this power or to claim that; *to say*, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or *to say*, Arise and walk?"

"That is easiest, and I will now prove my right to say it, by saying with effect, and with an outward consequence setting its seal to My truth, the harder word—Rise up and walk."[1]

[1] Trench on the Miracles.

By the power of Christ man's helplessness is abolished.

"The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

And man, restored, forgiven, is able, obedient to the will of the Spirit, to "walk and to please God."

The power of the Lord is still present to heal sinful man.

He delegates His power to those whom by His Holy Spirit He has ordained:

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them."

Man, helpless through the ravages of sin, and yet wishing to be healed, draws near with faith to the tribunal of mercy, and there finds still—

"The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Christ forgives, because Christ in the tenderness of His love, wishes, not only for our restoration, but for our union with Himself.

He wishes that our hearts and lives, cleansed by Himself, should be directed and ruled by His own Holy Spirit.

He wishes to see in us the fruits of His Passion.

When He is willing to forgive, when He longs that we should make a good Communion, let nothing on our part hinder.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me: And bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling."

"And that I may go into the Altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness."

"O put Thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God."

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O Almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. v. 15. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xxii. 1.

To God, Almighty and most Merciful, the God of bountiful goodness, our prayer is addressed.

His Almighty power is shown in His ability to "keep us from all things that may hurt us."

His goodness is shown in His willingness so to keep us.

His mercy—there is something both retrospective and prospective in our appeal.

We know we have failed so often, both in cheerful accomplishment of His Will, and in readiness to avoid the things which we felt were hurtful to us.

And our want of correspondence to the "bountiful goodness" of God in the past makes our plea for mercy in the present and future the more urgent.

Whatever may have been the case in the past, we feel as though now we could not do the things that we would.

We throw ourselves upon the limitless mercy of our God, upon His goodness, and upon His Almighty power.

We had been thinking that our lives did not matter; that so long as we did not do any positive harm it was all right.

What a revelation it is that the "Almighty and most merciful God" has been thinking of us all the time; that we rest upon the Mind of God; that the success or failure of our lives depends upon our accomplishment of the things which God would have us do.

We are so insignificant, and yet "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

God Himself has a design for the most insignificant of our lives:

> "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the Mount."

Two things then we see—

I. That for every life there is a rule—the Will of God;
II. That our duty consists in a ready and cheerful accomplishment of that Will.

I. Consider the infinite peace of the soul which recognises the Merciful Hand of God in directing the circumstances of life.

Even the things which seem to hurt us are accepted as the loving discipline of Perfect Wisdom.

And God uses the outward circumstances of life for the training of the spiritual being.

Both "body and soul" have to be surrendered to the Will of our Father in Heaven.

Without discipline the life will bear no fruit.

II. "Cheerfulness is the very life and soul of all good

works; no work is good which is not done in a spirit of alacrity and joy."[1]

Such cheerfulness is the outcome of our perception of our true relationship to God:

> "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

This cheerful alacrity is the characteristic of—

(*a*) The King of Saints.
"Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God."
(*b*) The Virgin Mother and the Saints.
"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word."
St. Paul.—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"
St. Peter.—"Arise up quickly. . . . And he went out, and followed Him."
(*c*) The Angelic Hosts.
"O praise the Lord, ye angels of His; ye that fulfil His commandment, and hearken unto the voice of His word."

It must be the characteristic of those who are trying to follow the King of Saints in the royal road of the Cross.

How apt is the exhortation of the Epistle, following upon the teaching of the Collect:

> "See then that we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."
> "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
> "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is."

"As wise," we shall be "looking around," seeking where we may find the Sacred Footprints, where are the dangers we should avoid.

[1] Dean Goulburn.

As children of God we must rely upon "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of knowledge," that we may perceive "what the will of the Lord is."

Not only will He enable us to perceive, but give us "ghostly strength" wherewith to do that Will.

St. Paul teaches the same spirit of cheerfulness in obedience which he himself practised:

> "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
>
> "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The words tell of two things—

(*a*) An inward life of union with God.

(*b*) A union so complete as to involve not merely acceptance of, but thanksgiving for, all His dealings.

What a lofty ideal is set before us; how far we fall short of such a spirit of thanksgiving!

The King, in the Holy Gospel, made a marriage for His Son—

> "And sent forth His servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come."

The King had the right to expect the attendance of those who were bidden, and more than once he sent to remind them of their duty:

> "All things are ready; come unto the marriage."

But in them there was no readiness, there was no cheerful alacrity of obedience:

> "They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise."

Some even maltreated and slew the messengers of the King:

> "When the King heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city."

How soon unreadiness, disinclination to obey, leads to open rebellion. How awful is the penalty of resistance to the invitations of the most merciful God.

"Ready both in *body* and soul," we said in the Collect. The man "which had not on a wedding garment" had made no preparation.

For neglect, not for actual commission of wrong, are the awful words of condemnation pronounced.

The King makes a marriage for His Son in the Holy Eucharist.

It is the foretaste of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb to which He bids us:

> "All things are ready; come unto the marriage."

It is the invitation of the most merciful God; it is the provision of His "bountiful goodness."

It is His Will that we should obey the command which He has a right to issue.

For He knows that only through the Food there offered to us can we gain strength to accomplish the things that He would have done.

That sheltered in Him to Whom our souls are, through that Food, united, we may hope to be kept from the things that would hurt us.

For the marriage is between Christ and His Church, between Christ and those who are members of His Spouse, the Church.

Christ is all: the Bridegroom and the Food. He unites us to Himself, and feeds us with His own most precious Body and Blood.

Oh, how gracious is the invitation, how boundless is the mercy, how tender is the love!

Alas! that men, that *we*, should make "light of it"; that some should allow the world, some pleasure, some their own way, to stand between them and the joy of our Lord.

The peril is so great. God, in mercy, reveals to us the danger of neglect.

Once, by faith, see the realities of the Heavenly Banquet, and the unreadiness is lost in a cheerful alacrity of obedience.

Christ is there; Christ invites; Christ is ready to unite Himself to us.

The soul is bowed down before the majesty of such love and condescension.

"Lord, I am not worthy;" and yet because Thou dost bid me, I venture to draw near.

See what the soul, united to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, is enabled to say—

(i.) "Our Father, Which art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done."

(ii.) "Here we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee."

(iii.) "We most humbly beseech Thee, O Heavenly Father, so to assist us with Thy grace, that . . . we may do all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk in."

It is only through union with the Sacrifice of Jesus that

we can hope cheerfully to offer ourselves for the accomplishment in us of the Will of God.

1. Listen to the Voice of Jesus saying—

"I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My Hands, and no man regarded. Ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of My reproof."

2. Pray for grace—

"So to love Him that, beginning to taste and see how gracious the Lord is, you may desire no other thing but to receive Him on earth, and be united to Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

3. Remember—

"Many are called, but few are chosen."

Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. vi. 10. *The Gospel.*—St. John iv. 46.

Twelve times during the Sundays after Trinity the Collects include an allusion, or an appeal, to the Mercy of God.

The frequent reference to that attribute is called forth by the consciousness, in those who approach God's Altar, of

(*a*) The presence of sin;
(*b*) The effects of sin.

The petition to-day is twofold, and each petition contains two clauses.

(i.) "Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people
  (*a*) Pardon and
  (*b*) Peace."
(ii.) And then the consequences:
  (*a*) "That they may be cleansed from all their sins, and
  (*b*) Serve Thee with a quiet mind."

If you take the converse of the latter words, you see clearly the condition of the sin-laden soul.

It is stained with impurity.

Its service of God has been marred by the unrest, which is the result of sin.

It is only the Mercy of God which can give that which the soul, thus situated, needs: first pardon, and then, as the result of pardon, peace.

Those who, loving the habitation of God's House, are most regular at the Holy Eucharist, are most conscious of their need of mercy. Growth in grace quickens the sense of need.

As they gaze deeper into the wonders of the Presence and Love of Jesus their perception of their own uncleanness in His sight is increased.

They know that apart from Jesus the soul can find no peace.

Joy in the service of God—of which we thought last week—and peace are closely allied:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace."

"The Kingdom of God is joy and peace."

"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

The joy and peace spring from the pardon and the cleansing, which are the work of Him Who has

"Made peace through the Blood of His Cross."

"The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, . . . be glory and dominion for ever."

The pardon of God is not mere acquittal; its consequence is cleansing, its result restoration.

"If it were possible for us to be forgiven without being cleansed, we should still be far from preserving a quiet mind."

"God does not will to surround Himself with a crowd of acquitted criminals, but with a family of redeemed and adopted children."

"His grace saves both from the *guilt* and *power* of sin."[1]

Sin separates from God. Its presence pollutes the soul, and occasions the fever of unrest.

The pardon of God cleanses, brings peace, and restores to the life of union.

The miracle recorded in the Gospel affords an illustration.

The sickness of the body is a type of the soul-sickness, which is the consequence of sin.

Christ's healing of bodily disease is a type of His work in the cleansing of the soul.

The nobleman's son lies sick of a fever, and is "at the point of death."

The father pleads for mercy with faith and urgency. "Sir, come down ere my child die."

The fever in the system may have been slight at first, but is swift in progress and deadly in effects.

The word of Christ not only expels the disease—"the fever left him"—but is the communication of renewed life —"thy son liveth."

How great is the danger of sins which seem insignificant, how rigid must be our rule of self-examination.

[1] Bishop of Vermont.

The sin committed is but the symptom of the hidden evil The germ, not merely the symptom, has to be attacked.

The Good Physician, to Whom the soul is laid bare in confession, pours in the oil and wine of His grace for its cleansing and healing.

Contemplate the joy of the Only-begotten Son in bringing back to the Eternal Father one of His children, cleansed, restored. "Thy son liveth."

Contemplate the joy of the Eternal Father in the work of His Only-begotten Son in the restoration of a sinner. "This My son was dead, and is alive again."

The Epistle speaks—

(i.) Of the warfare which has to be waged against the sins for the pardon of which we pray.

(ii.) Of the weapons whereby sin is to be defeated, and peace to be preserved.

The enemies are spiritual, of vast power, resource, and malignity.

Alone, it is impossible for man to resist them.

Christ has fought, and Christ has conquered; therefore,

"My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Sin weakens the soul, pardon restores strength.

But the very contact with evil, the conflict with the powers of darkness, involves a measure of pollution.

Hence our need of cleansing. Even our armour must be kept bright:

"Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace."

Equipped with "the whole armour of God," the soul will meet the attacks of evil with "a quiet mind."

And even when the strife is fiercest, in "the evil day," the soul will be able to "withstand."

"Having done all," borne all, suffered all cheerfully, it will be able to "stand" firm and upright.

Contrast with such a picture a soul unforgiven, uncleansed, unarmed, fever-stricken, hopeless, falling an easy prey to "the wiles of the devil."

How needful that we should observe the Apostle's admonition:

> "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

"Sir, come down ere my child die."

How often, before the Altar, has the prayer gone up for one dear to us, sick in body, or sick in soul.

How often has it been offered for ourselves, conscious of the inroads of sin upon our lives.

> "My soul is full of troubles; and my life draweth nigh unto the grave."

The Collect seems the very expression of our desires—pardon and peace, cleansing and a quiet mind.

> "Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness."
>
> "Wash me throughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin."
>
> "O give me the comfort of Thy help again; and stablish me with Thy free Spirit."

Pardon comes from Jesus, and peace is His loving gift.

And cleansing comes through His most Precious Blood, and a quiet mind from resting in His Wounded Side.

Yes; Jesus is all, and He is ours, and we are His:

> "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

"Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the Flesh of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most Precious Blood."

On those who eat that Sacred Body and receive that Precious Blood there falls the *peace* of God.

A peace which endures even in the midst of strife; a peace which is the foretaste of Heaven.

Washed in the Blood of the Lamb, strengthened with the Bread of Life, joyful through union with the Prince of Peace, we can go forth from the Altar to serve God with a quiet mind.

In *Preparation*—

"For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

In *Communion*—

"The Lord of peace Himself give you peace always."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."

Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Phil. i. 3. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xviii. 21.

The English Collect does not exactly reproduce the sense of the Latin.

The word "pietas," which is translated "godliness," rather stands for God's Fatherly care of His family than for our religious character.

But it may well cover—

(*a*) His Fatherly attitude to us in care and protection.
(*b*) Our filial attitude towards Him in loving and obedient service.[1]

1. You may notice that on the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity we prayed that God, of His "continual pity," would cleanse and defend His Church.

Now we ask that that same Church, His Household, may be kept in "continual godliness."

The cleansing and defence of the continual pity are needed if the godliness is to be continual, either in the life of the Church or of the individual members.

[1] Bishop of Vermont, "Notes on the Collects."

There must be "adversities." The Household of God on earth must be "militant," for the enemies who encompass the Church will never cease to seek her destruction.

But—"God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early."

The Church is founded on the Rock, and "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

> "See round Thine ark the hungry billows curling;
> See how Thy foes their banners are unfurling;
> Lord, while their darts envenomed they are hurling,
> Thou canst preserve us."

In connection with the life of the Church two pictures occur to us:

(i.) Christ in the storm-tossed vessel. "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?"

(ii.) The Risen Christ in the midst of His disciples in the Upper Chamber. "When the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

In connection with the life of the individual members of the Household:

(i.) St. Peter's deliverance from prison. "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His Angel.'

(ii.) The vision vouchsafed to St. Paul. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee."

2. Then note—

(*a*) How the "godliness" of the Household is to show itself—"in good works."

(*b*) What is to be its object—"the glory of Thy Name."

"Freed by Thy protection," the Latin original says, "from all adversities, we may in good works be devoted to Thy Name."

"The Name of God, that is, His Character as He has revealed Himself to us, is to be the object of His people's loving adoration."

We shall set forth the glory of our God by our good works, as we imitate His perfections:

> "Be ye followers (imitators) of God as dear children."
>
> "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another."
>
> "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

Think of the words of the Great Head of the Household of God with Calvary in view:

> "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? . . . Father, glorify Thy Name."
>
> "I have glorified Thee on earth."

Can there be a higher motive than this; following in the Master's steps, to live, work, suffer, for the glory of God's Name?

Then see how the Epistle comes in to take up and add emphasis to the teaching of the Collect.

God calls His Household to work for Him, but He Himself first works *in* them:

> "He Who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."

That is God's side in the work of man's perfecting; then follows the Household's:

> "This I pray, that your *love* may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment"—or discernment.

That is the true order. Love is to be not a mere sentiment, but founded on knowledge and discernment of the Character of God.

And then the issue—

"That ye may be filled with the fruits of righteousness," that is, with "the good works" of which the Collect has spoken.

The life is to be one of progressive abundance, culminating in perfect fulness.

"In this busy age we must note particularly that good works are not valuable in themselves, but valuable in the sight of God as *fruits* of the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls."

"They are valuable as the outcome of that love which springs from the knowledge of God, and of His relationship to us."

There must be cultivation of the interior life if the external works are to be well-pleasing to God.

The exercise of a naturally restless activity, even in the name of religion, may fail to find acceptance:

> "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? And in Thy Name done many wonderful works?"
>
> "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."

St. Paul says that the fruits of righteousness "are *by Jesus Christ.*"

Only by union with the life of Jesus Christ, and by the power of his Spirit, cherished within the soul, can we hope to bear fruit to "the glory and praise of God."

In the Holy Gospel the king manifests the good work of forgiveness to his servant.

The debt could not be discharged by the man's own effort.

But he is the king's servant, one of his household, and listening to his plea for patience, the king "was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt."

The servant, unmoved by the compassion shown to him, is unfruitful in the work of righteousness.

He has no patience, no compassion, no forgiveness for his neighbour's debt, so trifling by comparison with that from which he has himself been set free.

"Father, forgive them," prayed our Master upon the Cross, and God was glorified in the prayer of His Divine Son.

"I will never forgive," we say. "I will forgive, but shall never forget." And God's glory is dimmed by the unforgiving spirit of His Household:

> "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

We, the servants of our King, are coming to Him in the Holy Eucharist.

How often have we sinned against Him, our Brother, and how often has He forgiven us?

"Till seven times?" or "till seventy times seven?"

Look over your past confessions, and find your answer there.

Not only has He forgiven our sins of commission, but our sins of omission.

As partakers of God's grace in the Sacraments of His

Church we *ought* to have abounded "yet more and more," we *ought* to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Our debt to our King—what words can express it? Who can stand before Him when He "would take account of His servants"?

Dwell on that truth: He *is* our King, we *are* His servants.

He allows the plea—because of our relationship to Him. He has listened to our plea, He has had compassion, He has loosed, He has forgiven.

And you? In the Presence of Jesus, test your forgiveness of the little injuries, little slights, little wrongs, partly imaginary, often magnified, which you may have received.

Do we, "from our hearts," "forgive every one his brother their trespasses"?

God waits for our devout service, to be shown in those fruits of righteousness, which, springing from union with His Son, shall be to the glory of His Holy Name.

As the object of the Divine Compassion pray, for—

(i.) Forgiveness for past ingratitude to God, and hardness of heart towards your neighbours.

(ii.) Recognition of the longing of the Son of God for your more perfect service.

(iii.) Devotion to the Holy Name.

Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O God, our refuge and strength, Who art the author of all godliness; Be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Phil. iii. 17. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xxii. 15.

> "O Lord, Thou art my God; Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat."
>
> "O God, our refuge and strength."

We prayed God last Sunday to keep His Household in "continual godliness."

This Sunday, the Household, knowing well by experience the "adversities," the "things adverse," which hinder their progress in godliness, turn to Him Who is

(*a*) Their refuge;
(*b*) Their strength;
(*c*) The Author of that godliness in which they pray to be kept.

A week's experience of the storm and stress of life in the midst of the world teaches us the need of a refuge.

Storm-tossed, beaten by the waves, with "rent cordage, shattered deck," we fly to the Altar of our God for refuge.

"Be still," the Voice of Jesus says to us, "and know that I am God." "The Eternal God is thy refuge."

The world-voices sound without; the echoes of its tumult still reach our ears, but

> "Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own Presence from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues."
>
> "My God is the Rock of my refuge."

"Oh! how strong is that Divine Rock! How sweet are the clefts of that Rock! What shall I fear, since I have found shelter there?"

"If the hurricane rage around me I shall not fear, for that Rock will resist the storm; if the enemy pursue me I will laugh him to scorn, being hidden in the depths of that Rock."

"In the clefts of that holy retreat my soul will forget her misery; she will heal her wounds, and will exclaim—

> "If the Lord Himself had not been on my side when men rose up against me, they would have swallowed me up. 'My help standeth in the Name of the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth.'"[1]

But we seek that refuge not merely in a spirit of fear, but in a spirit of *trust*.

> "I will trust in the covert of Thy wings."

He Who is our refuge is at the same time our strength.

> "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."
>
> "The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God."

The battle brings weariness, and the wounds cause weak-

[1] "Meditations on the Eucharist," De la Bouillerie.

ness. We fly to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and find Him to be our "Refuge and our Strength."

You know so well what the battle of life is. Ask yourself, What hope would there be without Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament?

But even more. God is "the Author of all Godliness." "Pietas," the word is, in Latin, piety or devotion.

Marvel is added to marvel. God is not only our Refuge, but our Strength; and, in addition, He is the Source or Fount of true devotion.

The spring flows from the clefts of the Rock.

"Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

The Spirit of God, working within us, inspires the devotion which is His due.

And that devotion finds utterance in "the devout prayers" which we offer.

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

In order that we may "obtain effectually" we must "ask faithfully," and the faithful prayers will be those which are offered in reliance upon the Holy Spirit's guidance:

"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."

"Praying in the Holy Ghost."

What need there is that in our approach to the Holy Eucharist we should seek the illumination of God the Holy Ghost.

We need His guidance both in our preparation, and in the devotions which we offer before the throne of God.

The Gospel tells us of those who did *not* "ask faithfully," though their request was specious and outwardly innocent:

"Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?'"

"Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid."

We must test and try ourselves before we come into the Sacred Presence; we must test our very prayers, lest we also fall into condemnation:

"Within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted."

Meditate upon the marvels of God's love in the Eucharist, on all that He does, and is willing to do, for you there.

The least you can do in response to such Love is to bring to Him a pure heart, and the offering of a true devotion.

And for both you need the aid of God the Holy Ghost.

"And so the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace,
Till he becomes the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling."

"I believe in the Communion of Saints."

"Brethren," says St. Paul in the Epistle, "be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example."

In the Church of God we have the glorious heritage of the devotion and the pattern of the Saints.

Their lives and their victories are to be our example and our encouragement.

They had but one Refuge, and one Strength; their piety had one Source; and their prayers were effectual because offered in faith in the One Name.

The Refuge is the same, the Strength the same, the Fount of spiritual life the same.

The difference is in us; "*our* conversation," "*our* citizenship" is not "in heaven," but in earth. We do not possess the heavenly mind.

What is the heavenly mind? The mind which is ever looking to and looking for "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ":

> "Set your affection (mind) on things above, not on things on the earth."
>
> "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

He who recognises God as the Refuge and Strength of his life, who seeks the inspiration of the Spirit to guide him in devotion, will grow day by day in the saintly spirit and the heavenly mind.

"But I am so far from all this. I am so earthly. I *cannot* attain."

No, you cannot while you look to self, and not to the help which God provides for you.

1. "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

You have not only the example, but the prayers of the Saints of God to help you.

2. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

The Almighty power of the victorious Christ is pledged to you, and that power is able even to subdue you, with all your earthliness, to Himself.

3. Jesus stoops to you in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

He condescends to seek your love; He appeals to you to take refuge in His Presence.

He humbles Himself that you may find strength in Him.

He comes in tenderest guise that He may win your devotion.

He unites Himself with your prayers, seeking so to strengthen your faith that you may "obtain effectually."

In *Preparation*—

Pray earnestly for the illumination of God the Holy Ghost, that you may see all that God so lovingly offers, all that you so thoughtlessly neglect.

"Lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death."

In *Communion*—

Endeavour to "render unto God the things that are God's"; the due acknowledgment of His claims upon you, and the full devotion of your whole being.

"I am Thy servant and Thy son."

In *Thanksgiving*—

In your daily life, in all your prayers, especially at the daily Eucharist, strive, in grateful love, to be looking "for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

"They saw no man save Jesus only."

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed: Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

The Epistle.—Col. i. 3. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. ix. 18.

Man suffering under the sense of the bondage of sin appeals to the "bountiful goodness" of God for deliverance.

> "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
>
> "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey."
>
> "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage."

"The law of habit obtains as surely in the moral life as in any other sphere of action."

Sin is insidious in its approach, and progressive in its character:

> "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."

From the moment you encourage what approaches to sin, by yielding to natural infirmity, or by palliating neglect of duty, you become the slave of sin.

The bondage at first may appear slight, but gradually becomes heavy and galling.

The understanding becomes darkened, the affections become perverted, the will weakened, the conscience deadened; the whole being becomes enslaved.

The process is so gradual that we are ignorant of our condition until we make an effort to be free.

Hence the need for diligent self-examination, and for resistance of the beginnings of evil.

Regularity in Confession is most helpful in guarding against the formation of habits of sin, and in checking their growth.

Two expressions invite attention—

(*a*) "Our frailty."
(*b*) "The bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed."

(*a*) The same word occurred in the Collect for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

The use of it involves no intention of disclaiming responsibility for our sins.

(*b*) "Absolve nexus quas contraximus."

"Loose the bands which we have knit together."

"This is the meaning of the growing power and danger of sins, committed not so much in wilfulness as in frailty; mere weakness of will, the non-resistance that cannot say 'no' to the temptation."[1]

The thought of man's work and God's work are linked together.

[1] Bishop Doane, "Mosaics."

We bind ourselves with the habits of sin: God seeks to unloose us.

The loosing, or absolution, is to be effected by the working together of our effort and will with God's.

We seek to be loosed, not merely from fear or shame, but from sin itself.

Not merely from the fruit of sin, but from the power of sin.

True, "My wickednesses are gone over my head: and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear."

But, "I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds."

The two miracles described in the Gospel afford illustrations of the power of Christ to loose.

(i.) The woman with the issue of blood is loosed, by touching "the hem of his garment," from the bondage of her infirmity.

(ii.) The daughter of Jairus is loosed from the bonds of death, and raised to life.

Contemplate the faith both of the woman and of Jairus:

"If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole."

"My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay Thy Hand upon her, and she shall live."

The woman had no doubt as to the *power* of Jesus to unloose.

Jairus had no doubt either of His *power* or His *will*.

Faith co-operates with the power of God in the work of absolution.

The "frailty," or the powerlessness, of man is contrasted with the power of God.

The woman, we read in St. Mark v. 26—

> "Had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

The daughter of Jairus was beyond all hope from human means.

But to the power of God the child is only asleep, although to the powerlessness of man she is really dead.

The "bountiful goodness" of God is manifested in the exercise of His Almighty power.

In the Epistle St. Paul gives thanks for those who are exhibiting in their lives the fruits of loosing, or absolution.

Note how he dwells on the three cardinal virtues, faith, hope, love.

And his fervent prayer for the perfecting of his disciples through grace.

Those whom Christ has loosed from the bands of sin and infirmity, those whom He has raised from the dead, are to be—

(i.) "Filled with the knowledge of His Will in all wisdom."
(ii.) "Walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."
(iii.) "Fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."
(iv.) "Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power."
(v.) "Unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."
(vi.) "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light."

What a contrast we can discern between those who are "tied and bound by the chain of their sins" and those who by the "bountiful goodness" of God have been loosed from the bands which held them.

Only through absolution comes the hope of walking worthy of the Lord, of fruitfulness, and of spiritual growth.

Only through absolution can we be made meet to be partakers in the inheritance of the Saints.

How filled with sorrow we often are, as we approach the Holy Eucharist, when we discern—

(*a*) The consequences of the habits of sin, which we have woven round our lives.

We want to pray, we want to offer, we want to love.

But the habit of prayerlessness, the habit of neglect, the habit of undevotion, frustrates our desire.

(*b*) Our incapacity to free ourselves. We have tried so many times and in so many ways to do better.

We have done everything except try the right way, and use the right and only means.

We need faith—the fruit of the Holy Ghost—in the power and willingness of God.

Faith to discern the power which resides in the Sacraments—"the hem of His garment."

Faith to bring us to Him in our helplessness. "Come and lay Thy Hand upon me, and I shall live."

Yes, the soul is not dead, but sleeping under the bondage of its habits.

The Advent call is already sounding in the distance.

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Listen to the Voice of Jesus, which speaks to us in the Sacraments of His Church.

We come "fearing and trembling," and fall down before Him, and tell Him "all the truth."

"Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace and be whole of thy plague."

"Behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand."

And then like Lazarus we sit "at the Table with Him," and receive that Food which is able to "preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

He allows us not merely to touch the hem of His garment, but to communicate with His Body, His Soul, His Godhead.

And Jesus Himself pleads for us; and the Blessed Mother and the Saints pray for us, that we may be filled, may be fruitful, may be strengthened, may attain unto the inheritance "that fadeth not away."

In *Preparation*—

"Let us break their bonds asunder: and cast away their cords from us."

In *Communion*—

"He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee: and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee."

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.—Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Jer. xxiii. 5. *The Gospel.*—St. John vi. 5.

We have come to the end, the last Sunday after Trinity. Next Sunday we shall, as we said a year ago, "begin again."

Efforts finished, efforts to be recommenced; and the Church, wishing that her children's efforts should be both fruitful and sustained, bids us pray—

> "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people; that they, *plenteously* bringing forth the fruit of good works."

God alone, as we noticed on the Fourth Sunday after Easter, can "order the unruly wills of sinful men."

The will grows weary, feeble, somnolent, and therefore we pray God to-day to "stir up" the wills of His people.

The motive is set before us in the Epistle:

> "The days come that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch, and a King shall reign."

"Behold thy King cometh unto thee," is the Advent warning.

The life, and the will, which is the spring of the life, must be prepared to meet Him, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

The Epistle, contrary to the usual custom, is from the Old Testament.

It is a prophecy of that which was to come, of the kingdom of the future King:

> "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely."
>
> "And this is His Name whereby He shall be called —the Lord our Righteousness."

And the song of the Kingdom shall be the song of deliverance, rising from the ransomed who "dwell in their own land," and rejoice in the Eternal Life of their Lord.

The King's Kingdom is the Holy Catholic Church.

The King gave up His life for the ransom of His people, but—

> "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

It is the lesson of Easter which comes back to our minds.

His servants, saved from sin and death, "dwell safely," strengthened by the Sacraments of His Church.

Sons of God, joint-heirs with Christ, they "dwell in their own land."

Day by day may they draw near to His Life in the Holy Eucharist, praising Him for the triumphs of His grace, receiving from Him the "plenteous reward" of patient effort.

But still the perfect accomplishment of the prophecy is not yet. It shall be fulfilled in all its fulness in "the day of His appearing."

Twice in the year the Gospel occurs—

(i.) At Mid-Lent, when Christ's people are in danger of growing weary, if they are making any Lenten effort at all.

(ii.) At the end of the Church's year; again because we grow weary. "Lest ye be weary and faint by the way."

The sense of the length of the way is so often pressing upon us.

We *have* tried, we say—we are always ready to make the most to ourselves of our efforts—and we have failed, or at least we have not met with the success which we think our efforts deserved.

The failure is not so much in ourselves; partly, of course—we make that concession—but circumstances and people have been against us.

And—this we only say in a whisper—God has not quite recognised, as we think He should have done, our little strivings after better things.

Alas! how often, among other weaknesses, the weakness of our memories escapes our notice.

We forget how intermittent, how short-lived, the efforts on which we look back have been.

We forget how constant and how assiduous has been God's care for us.

Herein is one of the blessings of belonging to the Holy Catholic Church.

She has her Liturgy, and by means of that Liturgy she preaches to us "the pure Word of God."

The Holy Eucharist is the daily setting forth of the love of the Ever Blessed Trinity.

The man who listens there to the teaching of the Holy Church *cannot* forget that God cares for him.

There, week by week, he learns not only what God does, but what God is.

"God is Love;" there is the fact and there is the proof. God's manifestation in the Flesh, brought before us at Christmas and Epiphany—that is the evidence to the fact.

"God is Love;" see the proof in the presence of the Suffering and Tempted Son of God all through Lent and Passiontide.

God is Power; there is the riven grave, and Christ the Victor, triumphant over powers which man alone could never have withstood.

God is Truth; for there at Whitsuntide is the promise fulfilled of the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

Love, Power, Truth: all found in the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

This is what the Church, by her Liturgy, by her course of Fast and Festival, teaches us that God is.

Then think of what God *does*—

(i.) He thinks of man.
(ii.) He provides for him.

God thought of man in his lost and fallen condition, and provided salvation for him through the Incarnation.

God admitted man into fellowship with Himself in Holy Baptism, and provides him with the grace of His Holy Spirit.

God thinks of man as he wanders afar from His Father's

side, and provides for him the means of restoration in the Sacrament of Penance.

God thinks of man, and provides for him, as, feebly and wearily, he toils in the Way of Life, the Bread which cometh down from heaven.

That is the special revelation of God's Love which to-day's Gospel sets before us.

A picture of the event of a day. True, but a picture of the Love of God throughout the endless day of eternity.

God did care, always has cared, does care, and will care, and in His care provide for the wants of His children.

There were the people following Christ; with poor and imperfect, and very often selfish motives.

They had seen His miracles on others, and did not know what to make of them. They were weary and tired; nothing seemed to come of following—only weariness and hunger.

Oh, it is so like ourselves; we seem to see ourselves in the throng.

We follow, because we should be afraid not to do so; just because others do, but our motive is vague and indefinite.

We pray, but there is so much selfishness in our prayers. We want this or that which we think would be profitable for us, and we complain because God knows best.

"I gave up going to Confession, or to Holy Communion, because I did not seem any the better for it."

"I have not said my prayers for some time past, because they were not answered."

How loving God is *not* to answer the prayers of those who ask in such a spirit!

How thankful we ought to be that He to Whom we pray is Infinite Wisdom, and gives only that which is really good for us.

Yes, *we* are among the multitude who follow Jesus.

We have seen His miracles of love and power on others, and we do not like to give up following. One day perhaps He may work a miracle on us.

It seems sometimes as though only a miracle could change us, could give us a stronger will, a new heart, a real victory over self.

And—we *are* so tired!

Then comes the revelation. All the time God has been thinking of us.

We have been in the Sacred Heart of Jesus all through the year.

He has walked with us, known us, shared the burden and heat of the day, and is ready with the provision of His Love.

In the Holy Eucharist we find Him.

Be still, my soul; cease thy words of weariness and complaint, and listen to Him Who speaks and is willing to impart to thee Himself.

"My grace is sufficient for thee."
"My strength is made perfect in weakness."
"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."
"All that I have is thine."

O Master, Saviour, God! Who hast borne with me, pardoned me, loved me, all through the year, I am Thine; oh, save me!

I tremble, and I fear lest again I fall from grace and grieve Thee by my sins.

Give me grace to say—

"Jesu, still lead on,
Till our rest be won!
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow, calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand
To our fatherland.

Jesu, still lead on,
Till our rest be won!
Heavenly Leader, still direct us,
Still support, console, protect us,
Till we safely stand
In our fatherland. Amen."

THE END

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